





# RELEASE THAT WITCH

BOOK 13

*Er Mu*

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# Release That Witch

(放开那个女巫)

by

Er Mu

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# Synopsis

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Cheng Yan transmigrated only to end up in a medieval Europe like world, becoming Roland, a Royal Prince. But this world doesn't seem to be the same as his former world, despite some similarities. Witches are real and they actually can use magic?

Follow Roland's battle for the throne against his siblings. Will he be able to win, even though the king already declared him to be a hopeless case and with the worst starting situation? With his knowledge of modern technologies and the help of the witches, who are known as devils' servants and are hunted by the the Holy Church, he might have a fighting chance.

Now, let his journey begin.

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# Chapter 1201: Proof

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Jean Bate absolutely did not want to become the King of Graycastle's enemy.

Although he had never met the King of Graycastle, he had heard a lot about him. The God's Punishment Army of the Kingdom of Everwinter and the Kingdom of Wolfheart had experienced an utter defeat in the battle against Graycastle; the alliance army of the nobles of the Kingdom of Dawn had been flattened within one day; Roland Wimbledon had united his kingdom within half a year; it was rumored that Graycastle had even interfered with the coup on the Archduke Island.

However, these rumors were incomparable to the news that the First Army had been fighting the demons over the past one year. He would have been skeptical had he heard the news from other lords, but he found it hard to refute the commander of the First Army.

Nonetheless, whether Jean believed it or not, he had no way to confirm its validity.

The plan of the King of Graycastle was actually a little too unrealistic and even preposterous in Jean's opinion. Jean Bate would pledge his alliance to Roland immediately if the latter took the throne of the Kingdom of Wolfheart, but the fact was that his true intention was to relocate the people in the two kingdoms! According to Iron Axe, King Roland was planning to ship civilians of the two countries by sea and by land until every single civilian left their native land. Most nobles did not really care about their subjects as long as the movement would bring them profits. However, it would be a different story to evacuate the whole city. A vacated city meant a huge drop in food, taxes and industrial growth. The nobles would not agree to this plan so easily unless it was absolutely necessary.

Even though the First Army was invulnerable, it could not possibly declare war against all the nobles in the Kingdom of Wolfheart. Without the support of the locals, their military logistics support would be in limbo. Furthermore, it appeared that Graycastle also intended to disperse their forces to attack the two countries at the same time, which was a surpassingly conceited and vainglorious act, as far as Jean could see.

After what seemed to be a long silence, Jean Bate said in a hushed voice, "I don't quite understand the rationale behind all this. If the demons are not coming from the Impassable Mountain Range, and we still continue to support the King of Graycastle, we would lose men, farmlands, cities and mines. I'm afraid we can't bear such a huge loss."

"I can't explain the reason to you. As the commander of the First Army, my duty here is to carry out the mission His Majesty entrusted to me. Yet..." Iron Axe broke off and then went on, "If you come visit Neverwinter, you'll know the answer."

"Fine then. Now, one last question..." the baron said as he moistened his lips. "You said nobles can make their own choices. What if I decide to come with you?"

Iron Axe nodded comprehensively, pointed at a clerk next to him and said, "This is Remy, the immigration officer of the Administrative Office of Neverwinter. He'll explain to you the next step."

"Hello, Mr. Baron, in that case, you'll become a member of the Kingdom of Graycastle," the immigration officer said as he leafed through the a stack of documents. "The first thing that I can tell you is that King Roland Wimbledon is a benevolent king. He'll never ill-treat anyone who has made a contribution to the kingdom. As Graycastle is governed by a series of laws, nobles in the kingdom are stripped of feudal power. Lands cannot be inherited. The same will also apply to you. As you have rich experience in city management, you could join the Administrative

Office and assume the post of local governor or help His Majesty to expand his territory, for instance, the Fertile Plains. Of course, if the demons don't invade the Four Kingdoms, you're free to continue to rule the Sedimentation Bay if you want." "If you're lucky, you could rule a land much bigger than this city, considering not every noble would come with us."

It took almost a quarter of an hour for Remy to read all the documents, which indeed detailed all the prospective aspect of the policy that seemed to be the offspring of a long deliberation. Jean Bate believed the person who had drafted these documents must be an extraordinary minister. for he himself did not have the capability to produce such marvelous work.

In short, the main content of this proposal was an interchange between short-term and long-term interests. He could possibly become more than a lord of a bay depending on his performance. Whether it was a good deal solely depended on himself.

Jean should have settled down to the contemplation of this proposal thoroughly. However, the current condition forced him to make a quick decision.

This was at least better than being killed by one of the two families.

Jean was indebted to a belief that it would take more than one or two years to evacuate two countries. During the relocation, he could still rule the Sedimentation Bay without worrying about the threat of the two families.

He thus took a sharp intake of breath and answered, "I would like to pledge alliance to the King of Graycastle."

"A wise choice," Iron Axe commented with the same stony look as though he had foreseen the result. "Now, you could issue an administrative order to start the evacuation. We have a team of professionals to assist you in this matter."



"That fast?" the baron asked in surprise.

"Yes, we won't be here long. The First Army will leave the Kingdom of Wolfheart for the interior within three days."

"But — " Jean Bate pursued after a moment of hesitation. "The knights from the Tusk and the Redstone Gate won't let you do so. They probably won't openly resist Graycastle, but they could interfere with your operation by attacking the patrol team of the Sedimentation Bay."

He felt a little embarrassed to reveal this truth, for just an hour ago, he had told Iron Axe that he was the only ruler of the Sedimentation Bay. However, he must raise this problem now to prevent the two families from stirring up trouble in the event they knew that he had colluded with Graycastle and offered the land. It was also a test to see whether Iron Axe really intended to fulfill his promise.

But Iron Axe's answer again surprised him.

"The Sedimentation Bay is the key to this immigration plan, and I don't allow anyone to thwart it. There will be around 100 people stationed here after the First Army departs," Iron Axe said as he nodded to one of his assistants, who immediately left the parlor. "I've done some research on the Kingdom of Wolfheart before I headed here. Like I said, I won't allow any interference. Nobody could blatantly resist us or play stealthy games behind us. To this end, we'll take some measures to remove these potential obstacles."

"You mean..."

"Seeing is believing," Iron Axe said as he rose. "Don't worry. Those threats they you're worried about will soon be gone."

"It's still raining so heavily," Smarty remarked as he stretched out his hand, feeling the rain drops.

"So?" White asked while hammering his sore leg with his hands. "Why are you still here?"

"I don't want to get soaked. Plus, this shed is for everyone. I can stay here as long as I like," he retorted, grimacing.

"You — " White said, looking utterly affronted. He was about to give Smarty a lesson, teaching him to have some respect toward the elder when suddenly, a group of Graycastle men who left their tents caught his attention.

Water splattered over the pavement as these people trooped out in two columns.

He was very curious about the reflective metal tubes they carried on their backs, They were as ominous as those black facilities they had set up in the sentry boxes.

As the group of soldiers disappeared in the rain, White suddenly understood why he felt so fidgeted. These metal tubes did not look like being made by humans. Regular blacksmiths could by no means forge them.

Some other people who took shelter from the rain also noticed that and started to murmur.

Yet Smarty was surprisingly quiet.

White thus turned around. However, to his dismay, Smarty was gone.

# Chapter 1202: A Thunderous War

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The campsite of the Redstone Gate and the Tusk Families were located near the driveway leading to the city, a place originally designed for caravans and mercenaries for temporary use. Now it served as an abode for delegations.

Since the campsite, which was boarded with low wooden fences, was on the opposite side of the Sedimentation Bay and was relatively safe, no particular security measures were taken. Neither of the delegations had put out sentries. They simply drew a line at the center of the campsite with spears and shields to mark out their territories.

Most people understood that the line did not represent anything. As long as the lord of the Sedimentation Bay did not make his decision, the two delegations would keep a civil tongue, and certainly they would not bother putting out sentries on such a wet day.

Therefore, when the 100 soldiers of the First Army stopped at around 200 meters from the campsite, neither of the two families noticed that they had visitors.

The knights did not realize the change in the situation until they heard the First Army demand their surrender.

"This is the First Army of Graycastle, who is now officially taking over the Sedimentation Bay. Under Neverwinter law, your conduct constitutes an illegal intrusion and illegal use of firearms. I demand your immediate surrender, otherwise we'll resort to force and you'll bear all the consequences of your action!"

This was preposterous!

The commander of the delegation of the Tusk Family pulled back the curtains and saw a man stand outside the campsite, speaking to him with a peculiar cylinder. A flag was rippling not far away, on

which was an unfamiliar coat of arms. However, he had a hard time associating these uninvited soldiers with Graycastle. For him, Graycastle was a distant and foreign country only existing in various rumors circulated in the neighborhood.

These people were all cloaked and soaked in the rain, looking amusingly pathetic and ridiculous. The fact that they demanded them to be disarmed further accorded him an unrealistic feeling.

The commander went downstairs and found that the floor had been packed with mercenaries, who were now speaking foul language and making obscene gestures. They would have probably spat on that man's face had it not been raining outside.

That was what low people typically did. As a noble, the commander had to come up with some useful strategies.

What should he do if these people were really Graycastle men?

Perhaps, he should wait for the Redstone Gate Family to take action.

He could not really ask his knights to disarm as those people had commanded, nor could he send an ambassador to negotiate with them, as he did not want to give them an impression of weakness.

The commander did not think the "alleged" Graycastle soldiers would suddenly attack them. They were, after all, so far away from the campsite, and the mercenaries had already reached their weapons, whereas the cloaked soldiers did not even possess a single horse.

At this moment, he had completely forgotten the warning previously given by the First Army.

For the nobles in the Kingdom of Wolfheart, wars were always time-consuming. They needed to first observe their enemy, issue commands, and then fight. These rules also applied to the battle with the Church of Hermes.

However, the First Army who had fought the demons viewed

battles as a completely different matter.

Therefore, nobody realized what had happened when the battle broke out.

15 minutes later, four mortars fired. Although not as powerful as the Longsong Cannons, the mortars were more than enough to destroy wooden watchtowers. Since these mortars were much more portable than the field artilleries, soldiers liked to use them to start a war.

The campsite was instantly razed to the ground. The furious execration of the delegation members was drowned out by the roaring shells. The wooden houses soon collapsed under the impact of the shockwaves, fragments of pillars, doors and windows flying in all directions.

The unit commander of the First Army immediately ordered the soldiers to charge.

They soon besieged the campsite.

Neither of the two families managed to launch an effective counterattack. Some fearless mercenaries dashed out against the dust but were soon shot down. To avoid incidental casualties, the First Army did not advance until the dust was washed away by the rain.

They did this not out of kindness but because His Majesty needed more mine laborers.

Meanwhile, the First Army asked the knights to yield again.

This time, most of them obeyed.

Within 30 minutes, the threat of the two families that vexed the baron was eliminated.

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Jean Bate was still in a shock after he returned to his mansion.

He knew Graycastle was powerful but had never expected them

to be so invincible. The battle that had just taken place a moment ago did not look like a typical war to him.

Jean finally understood why Iron Axe said "Seeing is believing". As a witness of the battle, he had to admit what he had seen was effable. He enjoyed the unfolding of the event with almost an air of contentment. He liked the reticence and steeliness of those Graycastle soldiers. The glaring contrast between their silence and the deafening explosion impressed him even more than the queer weapons themselves.

What had those people experienced?

"Now, do you believe that we could manage the Sedimentation Bay?" Iron Axe's voice interrupted his thought.

Jean Bate was rendered speechless for a moment. He simply nodded submissively.

"Relax," Iron Axe said with a faint smile. "Don't be afraid of the First Army. You've decided to serve King Roland. We won't allow anything to happen to the Sedimentation Bay or anyone to challenge His Majesty's authority. You're now one of us."

"One of them? That sounds so strange..." the baron thought to himself. Over the past few years in the Kingdom of Wolfheart, he had never expected to be associated with a country. However, the commander of the First Army seemed to think this was natural.

Jean found, surprisingly, that he did not repel this idea.

After a moment of silence, he heaved a deep sigh and said, "I'll take care of the relocation campaign."

# Chapter 1203: A Black Present

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Jean Bate was indeed fast. He not only offered half of the rooms in the mansion to the army but also sent some maids to serve the soldiers, although Iron Axe refused the service out of confidentiality concerns.

In watching the reluctant look of the several young officers from the General Staff, Iron Axe replied in a stony tone, "Time to work. Don't forget that your performance in this campaign is subject to Edith Kant's review. You should know the consequences if you make errors."

Everyone shuddered at the Pearl of the Northern Region's name and set to work.

"Map, I'll put up the map!"

"What about the schedule? I'll double check it."

"Anyone help me check the food?"

The room instantly became noisy.

"Look at these young fellows, always full of energy..." Remy commented while shaking his head. "The baron seems to have seen through them."

"A common trick nobles like to play," Iron Axe said, frowning. "He'd better employ his cunning little schemes on the immigration campaign."

"Don't worry. The Administrative Office will keep an eye on him," Remy promised while patting his chest. "Now, we've removed our first obstacle. It's better than I thought. The Tusk and the Redstone Gate Families indeed helped us, but it won't be that easy afterwards."

"No, it'll be just the same," Iron Axe corrected him.

"R-really?" Remy said in surprise.

"Because they've fallen behind," Iron Axe said and looked through the window. The overspread sky had cleared up a little bit.

"Because they've fallen behind." This was what Edith had told him before he had set off a week ago. He met Edith at the office of the General Staff, where they held a meeting to discuss how to efficiently carry out the immigration plan, with a secretary writing meeting minutes next to them. Edith said, "Most nobles haven't noticed the changes taking place in this world but are still dwelling exclusively on their personal interests while gloating over their wealth. They saw hardly anything else. I bet you plan to fight those nobles one by one, right?"

"If they impede His Majesty's plan, yes."

"That'll be too slow," Edith disapproved flatly. "This is different from the Graycastle unification war. We need to garrison troops in various foreign cities, so as time progresses, we'll have fewer soldiers at our command, which will thus significantly prolong the campaign. Those nobles won't openly resist the army but they'll definitely play stealthy behind your back. By the time you notice the damage and rush to rescue, it'll look bad on His Majesty."

"Then what should I do?"

"Set your goals beforehand, build alliance and fight enemies together," Edith said while handing him a table.

There was a list of items on the table, next to each of which was a point scale.

"What's this?" Iron Axe asked in bewilderment. It was his first time seeing such a strange form.

"A threat evaluation form? Or a manual of resistance level? Anyway, what it is called doesn't matter. I made this table based on nobles' mentality and other factors, including gender, heir, the size of their domains, the number of their troops, their behavior, etc.



You would have a rough understanding of each noble after filling out the form. The more information you obtain, the more accurate the evaluation will be. Since the situation in the Kingdom of Wolfheart and the Kingdom of Everwinter has changed a lot, the General Staff can't complete the form for you. If there's a city that's not on the form, just punch in the information and do the calculation yourself."

"And what next?" Iron Axe asked as he skimmed through the form.

"If the total point is lower than 50, it means the city has limited power and is not so ambitious. You could build alliance with them. These nobles could actually provide many things for you, such as local maps, the city structure, the demographics, and so on. More importantly, with the support of local lords, we'll be able to implement the plan more efficiently," Edith explained.

"As for those that are higher than 50..." Edith paused for a second and said, "Don't waste time on them. Whether they show any inclination to yield or not, you should crush them immediately."

Iron Axe was a little shocked at the method Edith proposed. A simple table would pretty much determine each noble's fate, even though Edith had never met or talked to any of them.

Iron Axe asked after a moment of silence, "Is the form... accurate?"

As the commander-in-chief of the First Army, he understood the importance of work efficiency and knew very well how much time this form could save them. Most of the ships were borrowed from the Chambers of Commerce at the Fjords, so he should wind up the campaign at his earliest, even if the demons were not planning to erect the Obelisk around the Impassable Mountain Range.

"There could be some errors here and there, and I'm not sure if 50 is a correct cut-off grade. However, considering we have limited time, I'll leave the details to your discretion," Edith said as she

sipped her tea leisurely. "The General Staff is only providing counsels here."

Iron Axe turned to the last page of the form and found a list of cities that Edith had already graded. All the information was obtained from the Kingdom of Dawn, and the top city below the cut-off grade was precisely the Sedimentation Bay, the first stop of their journey.

Before Iron Axe took his leave, he asked one last question.

"Aren't there any nobles who haven't fallen behind?"

"Of course there's such a possibility," Edith replied smilingly as she played with her hair. "However, in that case, you'll soon find him out even without this form because this person must be like me."

Iron Axe breathed out a sigh as he came out of his reveries and walked toward the campsite of the First Army. As Edith had said, nobles did not pose problems. The problem was how to mobilize civilians in an orderly and efficient manner.

Nevertheless, within two days, the dock of the Sedimentation Bay had been packed with thousands of people waiting to board the ships. Not only Iron Axe and Remy but also Jean Bate was taken aback by such a huge number.

The First Army, therefore, had to postpone their departure to manage these civilians.

"What's going on?" Iron Axe inquired Remy. "Did you exaggerate His Majesty's promise?"

"No, I know I don't have the authority to do that," Remy said while shaking his head. "I strictly follow the procedure set out by the Administrative Office. It really depends on how many people the local lord could persuade. The baron is apparently not so highly respected among his people compared to His Majesty, so I assume there would only be around 300-500 civilians."

"Now it's 20 times that number," Iron Axe remarked. Obviously it was good news to have so many immigrants all of a sudden, but he was also a little disturbed by such an unexpected high volume. Graycastle was, after all, a distant, unknown country for citizens of the Kingdom of Wolfheart. Naturally, Iron Axe suspected that someone was behind all this, who persuaded these people to abandon their native towns and venture into a journey to a completely foreign country.

"There could be only one explanation," Remy said meditatively, "that they're all refugees."

Refugees had nothing to lose. As long as they saw a ray of hope, they would rush for it.

"But these people are all freemen living in villages and towns near the Sedimentation Bay."

"Yes, they are, but my men heard some interesting rumors when they visited those towns. For example, the Redstone Gate Family, who holds an ancient grudge against the baron, plans to reduce subjects to slaves after they take over the Sedimentation Bay. Another rumor I heard is about a monster that takes humans for food in the mountainous area in the north. Some towns were ravaged and human remains littered the roads. Now, this monster is coming to the southeast. There are many other similar, convincing rumors that perturb the community. I guess this is why so many people choose to leave. If they don't go now, they'll become refugees, too."

Astounded, Iron Axe asked, "When did this happen?"

"At least a month and a half ago, not long after we set out from Neverwinter," Remy replied while stroking his chin. "Aren't we lucky?"

"Not at all," Iron Axe thought darkly. Someone was apparently inducing panic to the public, and this person also knew the purpose of the First Army pretty well.

Who was disseminating the news? Why did he help Graycastle? Was he a friend or a foe? A multitude of questions overwhelmed Iron Axe.

Until a soldier came in.

"Sir, someone asked me to hand this letter to you."

"Who?" Iron Axe asked as he took the envelope.

"He didn't leave his name. He's tiny though," the soldier replied. "But he told me the letter was given to him by someone else as well. Perhaps, the writer of this letter doesn't want to be known. I checked it already. There's nothing but the letter in there."

It was an ordinary burlap envelope much cheaper than one made of parchment or leather. Many shops sold this type of envelope. It was not sealed with wax but was laid open very casually. Iron Axe took the letter out of the envelope, and to his dismay, the letter was written on a piece of black, refined paper normally inaccessible to civilians.

He turned over the letter and found a line printed in gold.

"This is a present from your most loyal servant. I hope you like it."

# Chapter 1204: The Ridge of the Continent

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The temperature in the mountain range soon dropped after the sunset.

"Time to find a place to spend the night," Lightning thought. The temperature here varied dramatically between day and night. It was scorching during the day, and she would get burned easily if not covered with anything. When night fell, the wuthering wind would take away all the heat, and she would have probably been frozen to death if she had continued to sleep in trees like she had done in the Misty Forest.

Therefore, Lightning must find a shelter before the darkness pressed in.

"Let's call it a day," Lightning spoke over the Sigil of Listening. "I'll find a shelter and you go bring some food."

Maggie could not respond when she was flying, but Lightning knew she heard her.

She then dropped and flew very low above the ground. Agatha had reminded her several times before she had left Neverwinter that when she was looking for the demons, she had to either fly very high or very low to avoid trespassing God's Stone mines. It was also not advisable to change routes very often. Otherwise, once entering the God's Stone mines, nobody would be able to save her.

Lightning strictly followed Agatha's instruction. In this undulating mountain range, she could rely on nobody, so she must take good care of both herself and Maggie.

Since they had paid particular attention to possible shelters while she had been conducting the search, Lightning soon found a cave halfway up the mountain. A forest of stones stretched away below her, each stone the size of Neverwinter. Lightning suddenly had a

strange feeling that these stones and mountains were sculpted by a giant visible hand.

Streams were interspersed between the mountains, which torrented down upon a heavy rain or flood. The weather varied significantly in this mountainous area. More often than not it was clear and sunny on one side and stormy and gloomy on the other. Inexperienced explorers would be very likely flushed away by an unexpected flood at night if they pitched their tents on the mountainside. Therefore, it was very important to pick a highpoint of the land to spend the night.

Lightning had witnessed several floods since her entry to the ridge of the continent.

Further, unlike other mountains that were usually comprised of sharp and steep precipices, the mountains here were mostly composed of boulders with many holes in them, as though these rocks were some solidified fluids.

Fortunately, round as they were, the stones were still robust enough to form a shelter.

The cave she discovered this time was pretty big, around 100 square meters, littered with twigs and weeds, which Lightning inferred were the remains of bird nests. After confirming there was no potential danger in the cave, Lightning informed Maggie of her location and started to tidy up the cave.

When the darkness became impenetrable, Maggie, in the form of a snowy owl, fluttered into the cave and restored its human shape. She held up a package aloft like offering a present and said, "Look what I've got, coo!"

Lightning took the package and found a chicken and four giant bird eggs in it, a very rare finding in the Impassable Mountain Range. Even Maggie, an experienced hunter, would not always return with such fruitful results.

"Good job!"

Lightning stroked Maggie's head who returned a triumphant smile, "Haha."

A bonfire soon sprang into life. Lightning built a stove with the mound of earth collected from the foot of mountain to shade the firelight, covered the chicken with mud and then tossed the whole creature into the fire along with the bird eggs.

Dinner was ready 30 minutes later.

They had cooked like this numerous times in the Misty Forest and were now quite good at it.

The rich flavor of the chicken immediately escaped as they broke the hardened mud.

A sheen of oil glazed off the chicken, and the aroma of the spices filled the entire cave. After removing the skin, they saw the tender chicken meat beneath. The chicken was not overcooked at all, its meat white and juicy.

The pair devoured the bird eggs and the chicken ravenously and even ate the chicken bones.

Maggie belched in satisfaction and said, "Nothing could be better than eating our own food, coo."

Lightning cast Maggie a glance. She still remembered Maggie's indignant protest against her "eating a bird" in the beginning.

Lightning shook her head in amusement and asked, "Any luck today? Except for food though."

"Well, no, coo... the landscapes are quite the same here. If there were demons, I would spot them immediately, coo."

It would be really hard to spot God's Stone mines buried deep down underneath the ground from above. Lightning wondered where the supporting God's Punishment Witches currently were. If they could point out a rough direction for her, it would make her

life a lot easier.

She pointed at the cave and said, "Well, since you had no discovery, make me a bed then."

"OK, coo," Maggie replied as she paced to the designated location with her long white hair streaming behind her and then turned into a Devilbeast.

Lightning then extinguished the fire and lay down on Maggie's stomach. Compared to a sleeping bag, Maggie was a better shelter. Her stomach, as warm as a furnace, could shield her from cold winds and keep her warm during the night.

The only drawback of this method was that the skin of the Devilbeast was a little scruffy compared to Lorgar's soft fur.

"Are you not sleeping?" Maggie asked as she saw Lightning take out the Stone of Lighting.

"I need to make a journal entry to record our journey today. It won't be long. You sleep first."

"Alright," Maggie answered gruffly. After a long silence, she suddenly mumbled, "You're going to take me with you for the future exploration, right?"

Momentarily stunned, Lightning said in a gentle voice, "Yes, of course."

"I'll take care of you since Ashes is already gone," said Lightning within herself.

Maggie finally fell asleep after receiving an affirmative answer.

Lightning sat there for a long time before she took out her journal out of her bag.

It had been ten days since they had entered the mountainous area in the north of the Kingdom of Everwinter. They had covered a distance of 120 kilometers. The deeper they probed into the Impassable Mountain Range, the smaller she felt. This was an area



never intruded by human beings, and it was in here she had seen a breathtaking view. The forest of stones as vast as the Fertile Plains, the icefall, which was a sheer drop from Heaven to the ocean in the northeast, the sea of clouds that spiraled up, as well as the great rapture in the center of the ridge of the continent... Lightning now came to the realization that the Impassable Mountain Range that separated the four kingdoms was simply a branch of this mountain range. Those incredible scenes, all hidden behind the crests of the mountains, were inaccessible unless she flew over the steep cliffs.

Lightning now understood why her father was addicted to exploration.

Human beings were too little and insignificant compared to this world. She could only become stronger by getting to know more about it.

To become an explorer was the best decision she had ever made in her life.

Of course, she could explore the whole world later. Lightning knew she was now on a mission. If she flew too far away from the Kingdom of Everwinter, she would not only hinder the exploration but also cause unnecessary trouble to the supporting team. The "Roland" should have now almost reached the port of the Kingdom of Everwinter.

Lightning cast a glance at her hand drawn map and rested her eyes on the great rapture.

It seemed to be a protruding plain in the middle of the stone forest, but it was hollow inside, so Lightning was not sure how deep it was.

She could discern the fault underneath the crust.

If she still could not find traces of God's Stone mines or the demons, she would probably return to the Kingdom of Everwinter and meet with the supporting team to discuss the next step.

# Chapter 1205: A Dangerous Signal

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The next morning, Lightning disclosed her plan to Maggie. After a brief discussion, they decided to conduct another search in the stone forest and then head to the rapture as fast as they could.

They would have to return to the Snow Ridge in the Kingdom of Everwinter and complete the topographic map of this area before meeting the Taquila witches.

The sun broke over the horizon, the mountains were wrapped in rags of mist, and the rivers crisscrossed in the frost. There were traces left by the flood last night. As the roads began its winding ascent to the crests of the mountains, they saw a vast land of whiteness lay stretched before them. The distant rapture, completely covered by snow, resembled a giant porcelain bowl laid upside down.

It was estimated that the Kingdom of Everwinter was around 300 kilometers away, about the same size of the entire Southernmost Region. According to the map of the Land of Dawn drafted by the Union, the rapture was the offspring of various extinct volcanos.

Lightning had seen eruptions of active volcanos on the Searing Flame Islands, but they were nothing compared to the volcanos here.

Two hours later, the Exploration Group reached the rapture area.

They finally saw the whole landscape that lay out magnificently before them.

"It's so... so massive," Maggie exclaimed while flapping her wings. "I feel this hole could house an entire kingdom."

Lightning nodded in approval. The rapture was actually not a fault as she had thought but a huge scar that ripped the earth part. An immense invisible force underneath the ground had pushed the earth plates away from each other and formed cliffs on either side

of the rapture.

If this "scar" was indeed the result of volcanic activities, what a huge eruption it would have been?

Lightning and Maggie dropped and landed at two to three kilometers from the rapture. As usual, Maggie approached the rapture first, for she could merge herself perfectly into the surrounding environment without raising any suspicions of lurking enemies.

"Listen," Lightning warned Maggie, "don't go too deep into the rapture. Just take a peep at the entrance and come back. If you find anything out of character, report to me. Never go in there on your own — "

"Got it. I'll report to the captain first before making the next move," Maggie cut across her. "I know. I know, coo. You told me a lot of times... You sound like His Majesty, coo!"

"Er, really? Ahem, anyway, it doesn't hurt to reiterate! I'll stay here and conduct a preliminary search in this area. I'll go no farther than one kilometer. Remember this particular spot, and we'll meet here in 30 minutes. Understood?" Lightning said while scratching the back of her head, a little embarrassed. She remembered that Roland used to always remind her not to act alone. Because of this, Lightning had complained to her group members a lot, and boasted that an excellent explorer was born to know how to make correct judgements, and that such warnings were completely unnecessary. Now, she realized how childish she had been.

"No problem, coo!"

"Good. Off you go," Lightning said while patting Maggie on the shoulder.

"Maggie, go!" Maggie yelled excitedly and flew toward the center of the rapture.

Lightning's eyes followed Maggie until the latter disappeared from her sight. She then started to survey the surroundings.

Snowy owls were a type of birds commonly seen in this area. They belonged to the owl family. They had an excellent eye sight and were thus active during the day and at night. As long as Maggie proceeded with caution, it was not likely that she would expose herself. This district was a bleak emptiness of icebergs, without the slightest trace of wild animals. Maggie would be able to spot a demon immediately, if there was one.

In consideration of these factors, the first place Maggie ought to look for should be hiding places. She had to think critically and solve problems herself.

However, within five minutes, Lightning heard something flutter above her head.

Lightning looked up with a start and saw Maggie plunge frantically and throw herself onto her.

"D-demons, coo!" Maggie shouted.

The words sent a faint shiver through Lightning's heart. Were there God's stone mines here? She thus asked, "What did you find?"

"A giant Eye Demon that is now lying on its stomach beneath the cliff, coo!" Maggie demonstrated with both her hands and feet. "I just passed the rapture and looked into its eyes!"

That meant the Eye Demon had also seen her.

Lightning was glad that she was not the one who had discovered the Eye Demon. A snowy owl would not catch the attention of the Eye Demon.

"Then? Did you cry out?" Lightning pursued.

"Of course not. I'm a seasoned bird, no, a seasoned explorer, coo!" Maggie swelled up. "I didn't even blink. I just pretended to be

looking around. Then I averted my eyes, coo! I bet it had already put me out of its mind, coo!"

Then Lightning saw what had happened in her mind's eye.

A snowy owl stared at an Eye Demon and turned away...

"Oh, no!" Lightning snatched up Maggie and streaked toward one of the shelters they had previously found.

"Coo?" Maggie asked in bewilderment.

The shelter was an ice cave a few hundred meters away hidden behind rocks. The cave had not yet been filled with snow, so it was large enough to accommodate one person. Lightning rushed into the cave, poked half of her head out of the cave and looked up.

A moment later, a queer, shiny "door" suddenly appeared in midair.

Then a demon walked out from behind the door and stood suspended right above the rapture. Lightning felt her chest constrict involuntarily, as though she were facing Ursrook again.

The demon looked around cautiously before it dived. For a split second, Lightning felt all the blood within her freeze. It took her a great deal of efforts to suppress the urge to escape. However, she managed to stay put, as the demon was not aiming in her direction.

The demon plummeted to the ground covered in snow, exhaling clouds of white flurries. When it straightened up again, Lightning saw a snowy owl in its clawed hand.

Lightning swallowed hard, her hands involuntarily reaching for her own chest.

Fortunately, that snowy owl was not Maggie.

The demon gazed at the petrified snowy owl for a while and shook its head in disappointment before it released the bird. The owl screeched, soared into the sky, and disappeared from their

sight.

The demon did not linger. It stretched out its hand and ripped open the strange "door" and vanished in front of the two witches.

Lightning heaved a deep sigh.

They were safe for now.

"Coo... what do we do next?" Maggie asked, a little crestfallen, for she had realized her mistake.

Lightning would have taken another route to sneak into the rapture in the past. The rapture was so massive that it was impossible for the Eye Demon to cover every inch of the area. As an explorer, Lightning would like to be the first person who made the discovery.

Nevertheless, she was now not only an explorer but also the captain of the Neverwinter Exploration Group, as well as the scout for the First Army.

Whatever was hidden underneath the rapture, the presence of the Eye Demon and the Senior Demon indicated potential danger!

She must return to Neverwinter as soon as possible to inform King Roland Wimbleton.

"Let's go to the Snow Ridge and meet up with the Taquila witches," Lightning said through clenched teeth. "This mountain range is no longer safe. Someone has clearly set foot in this area."

# Chapter 1206: Just A Breath Away

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"Have you found anything?"

An upgraded subordinate came up to Hackzord as it revealed from the Distortion Door.

"No..." Hackzord said while studying its hands attentively. "Probably the Eye Demon guard made a mistake."

"That does happen occasionally. You could take a rest at the Red Mist Pond, sir. I'll alert you if anything comes up." The subordinate paused for a second before it went on, "Sir Valkries always bathes in this pond. I think... you could also relax your muscles in there every now and then."

This was a pretty good idea. Hackzord did want to indulge in such a mundane pleasure and explore the beauty of the Realm of Mind. However, the king would not put blames on the Nightmare if anything went wrong with the plan for the Western Front. Instead, Hackzord was the one who would bear all the consequences.

After a moment of silence, Hackzord answered, "It would be too much for you to connect four Eye Demon guards at the same time. We've entered the most crucial stage of our plan, so I'd better monitor the situation myself. This is the last stronghold on the Western Front, and we mustn't fail the king."

The subordinate's manner instantly tightened into formality as it heard the king's name. It replied fervently, "You're right, sir! I shall not let the king down!"

Valkries was the one that let its guard down.

Hackzord thought to himself expressionlessly.

After Ursrook's tragic death at Taquila, this mountainous area became the focus of the Western Front plan. Hackzord exercised all its efforts to monitor this district. It had persuaded the front to

spare four precious Eye Demon guards to monitor this area so that Hackzord could remain constant vigilance about lurking enemies.

Eye Demons, whose vision would not be restricted by distance, lighting conditions, or the size of objects, were the most astute observers. They could immediately sense enemies and inform the demons connected to them.

As the connection required a great deal of magic power, only upgraded ones were qualified to connect with Eye Demons. The world that Eye Demons saw were extremely complicated. They would not be able to mobilize themselves if they accepted all the information they received. Therefore, Eye Demons would normally conduct a preliminary screening and evaluate each creature they beheld in advance. Only those who posed a real threat or act strangely would be informed to the connected demons.

Hackzord had sensed unusual movements just a moment ago.

Like the subordinate had said, Eye Demons did make errors from time to time. This was because creatures tended to have their own unique ways to respond to nature, and not all of their behaviors were comprehensible. There was, for example, someone as inscrutable as the king, and also eccentrics like the Mask. Eye Demons, which lacked independent and critical thinking skills, sacrificed a lot for the thousands of eyes that encrusted their heads. As such, even though they possessed enormous magic power, not a single Eye Demon had upgraded to a Senior Lord over the past thousands of years.

Nevertheless, Eye Demons were still deemed as a rare species by the clan, whose birth rate was only a little higher than those of the Hatcher and the Mother of Soul.

Hackzord changed the subject. "How's the revival of the Birth Tower going?"

"It's almost done. Everything's going well."



"Very good. Take me there."

"Yes, my lord!"

Due to the impact of God's Stones, Hackzord could not go straight to the bottom of the valley and had to slowly make its descent through a flight of stairs.

As they went down, the surroundings gradually turned into a whirl of crimson. The air was impregnated with the Red Mist, and the towering precipices formed a giant vessel, a natural container chiseled out of rocks, where the Red Mist could easily accumulate. After more than half a year of accumulation, the lower part of the rapture was now permeated with the thick, dense Red Mist that could support thousands of lives.

However, Hackzord needed more than that.

Only when they erected the Birth Tower from the God's Stone mine could their kind truly survive on this land, without fearing a sudden disruption of the Red Mist supply.

The sunlight was completely replaced by a ghostly blue-purple light at the very bottom of the rapture. A stone tower stood magnificently before Hackzord among the God's Stone of Punishment Pillars.

A faint tremor of excitement smote upon Hackzord.

"No matter how many times I view it, it always awes me," the guard commented. "Before, we were only able to erect the tower when the Origin of Magic appeared."

"Yes, but it isn't the second Battle of Divine Will anymore," Hackzord said with a nod.

This particular Birth Tower was actually not supposed to be here because it did not grow out of the God's Stone mine but was an old one that had been set up a while ago. Although it currently relied on a huge base to support its weight, and its blotchy gray color signified a state of inactiveness, Hackzord knew this was just

temporary. Soon, the tower would be reconnected to the God's Stone mine via the Mother of Soul.

This was the upgrade they had obtained from the legacy shards. Over the past 400 years, their understanding of magic power and magic stones had experienced various drastic changes. The most important change was that they slowly became less independent of the Red Mist.

Nonetheless, human beings also made remarkable progress.

Hackzord approached the tower base and gazed at the dormant Mother of Soul.

The Mother of Soul was the origin of everything, the most important individual out of the whole clan. It would only reach its maturity when magic power reached its peak and when the Divine Will emerged. By that time, the Mother of Soul would be fused with the raw God's Punishment Stone. Within a few years, the God's Stone mine would transform into a high tower that would further produce more Red Mist via magic power.

Yet their new technology had considerably shortened this lengthy process. A fast-growing Birth Tower meant much less time to prepare for the war. As they would soon have ample Red Mist, they could even use the Red Mist as a weapon and quickly convert the enemy's territory into their own.

There were nearly 100 Inferior Demons taking care of the Mother of Soul. They cleaned and fed her. In fact, the bottom of the great rapture was filled with thousands of such Inferior Demons. Through the window of the tower base, Hackzord saw those demons busy excavating the ground and transporting supplies. Some upgraded demons, on the other hand, were issuing commands on their Bogle Beasts. In the center of the rapture stood the symbiotic demon newly created by the Mask. These powerful war machines would swarm toward their enemies upon an order. For a moment, Hackzord had an illusion that this place was the

real front.

In fact, this rapture was, in a sense, a frontline. If they failed to stop human beings on this continent, their future would become dismally uncertain. They had to defeat the mankind here to save their civilization.

Therefore, they must win this battle for the king!

# Chapter 1207: A New Idea

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In Neverwinter, Graycastle.

Since the Longsong Cannons were not portable, the Artillery Battalion had become exceptionally unoccupied these days compared to the Gun Battalion that had set out for the Kingdom of Wolfheart and the Kingdom of Everwinter to execute Roland's immigration plan. Apart from the daily training and the harvest, off-duty soldiers all went back home to spend time with their families.

Van'er also chose to go home. As the battalion commander, he rarely had free time these days, so Van'er treasured this rare opportunity to unite with his families. He also took the advantage of this break calling on neighbors and old friends. Since alcohol was expressively forbidden in the army, the only time Van'er could indulge in relvery was when he was off duty.

After years of development, businesses in Neverwinter were currently far more dynamic and diverse than those in the old king's city. Under the influence of Roland's commercial district plan, the premises on either side of the street had now been in extremely high demand. Two-story premises were soon let out to shop owners and foreign merchants and were subsequently transformed into hotels, restaurants and taverns. Commodies from various parts of world were being constantly shipped to Neverwinter for sale. These shops supplemented the Convenience Market that mainly provided citizens with life necessities and staples.

Van'er was impressed with the king's foresight as he wandered about on the street while surveying peddling vendors. The city was busy but not congested. Everything was in a strict order: peddlers set up their booths in a designated area; pedestrians walked on the walkway paved with slabs; carriages ran in the middle of the road.

Van'er remembered that someone had raised questions as to why they needed to broaden up the road in the beginning the construction work. Many people questioned about the necessity to create two respective lanes for pedestrians and wagons. Now, it appeared that it was quite a wise decision. Van'er suspected that Roland might have foreseen the future beforehand.

After passing two main driveways, Van'er reached his destination, the tavern "Lucky Shell".

As soon as he entered the store, a person limped up to him from behind the bar and greeted him. "Sir, there you are!"

"Just Van'er. This isn't the army," Van'er said smilingly while pulling the bartender into a crushing hug. "How's your business going? It looks good, eh?"

This person was known as "Iron Crutch". Half a year ago during that fierce night battle against the demons at Tower Station No. 1, a spear had penetrated Iron Crutch's abdomen and leg when he had been charging at the demons to retrieve the artillery field. He lost his consciousness on the spot. Although Nana later saved him, he still lost his right leg and had to replace it with an iron stick. That was how he got his nickname.

Iron Crutch thus retired from the military service. He opened this "Lucky Shell" in the eastern city with the benefits received from the government and his salaries, and this tavern became where the First Army often met each other during their break.

"Since I'm a retired veteran, the rent is relatively low for me. I can manage," Iron Crutch said while messaging his hands in excitement. "If only you could come here a little more often."

Van'er replied, "Then you'll have to wait for my retirement or when I'm like you. By the way, Are Rhone brothers here?"

"They're both upstairs. Let me take you up there."

"No, that's fine. Don't worry about me. Come drink with us when

you aren't so busy."

"Sounds good," Iron Crutch agreed pleasantly.

Van'er went up stairs and immediately saw his old friends sitting at a round table. Jop. Cat's Claw, Rodney and Nelson were all there. These people used to shudder at charging knights when the Artillery Battalion had first been founded. Now, they had all elevated themselves to military officers that the whole Artillery Battalion relied on. Because each of them had their own duties, they had not drunk together in the tavern for a while.

Van'er joined them. They exchanged opinions on various matters ardently. The most frequent topic of discussion was naturally the army and the upcoming Battle of Divine Will.

According to the king, this would be an unprecedentedly massive war that would involve the entire continent. They were not certain whether they could see each other again after the war ended.

"We're actually quite lucky. At least, we don't need to fight those monsters directly," Rodney drained his glass and sighed. "If the artillery is defeated, then we pretty much lose the battle."

"The problem is that we don't know what new tricks demons will play... Remember that unexpected night attack at Tower Station No.1?" Cat's Claw commented while shrugging. "I hope our soldiers could learn to cope with the demons themselves. They shouldn't wait for the Gun Battalion or the Special Unit of Strategies and Tactics to rescue them."

Everyone assented in earnest. "Exactly. If only we have powerful weapons as well. Revolving rifles could kill knights but not the demons."

"Drop it. I've heard that the army is going to use bolt rifles in the future. There'll be no revolvers anymore soon."

"Really? Commander, are you positive?"

Van'er confirmed with a nod in response to the others' inquiring

look, "The First Unit and the Sixth Unit have already switched to the new weapons. It may take a while for all of us to have one due to limited production."

Jop said, frowning, "I tried the new gun once. It's powerful and accurate, but it's too slow for a close-range attack. Can't the Artillery Battalion keep using the old weapons?"

"I'm afraid not. The management team has made the decision," Van'er replied while pointing at the ceiling. "We use traditional black powder to operate revolvers. The bullet will be pretty much the same, so those who used to produce black powder could now help with the bullet production."

"Then... maybe we should ask Sir Iron Axe to persuade His Majesty to design a new weapon for us?"

"Forget it," Nelson snorted. "Brian will definitely butt in!"

"Yes, the Artillery Battalion only needs cannons," Cat's Claw said with a perfect imitation of Brian's tone. "Don't you often say that the barrels should be as large as possible? Leave those tiny ones to us Gun Battalion. Lads, drink on!"

The group of officers roared with laughter. Only Van'er remained silent. He gazed at his glass, apparently lost in thought.

"Commander?"

Van'er stroked his chin and said slowly, "What if we create a weapon on our own?"

"What weapon? A new flintlock?" Cat's Claw asked, his brows raised. "Commander, you're drunk, aren't you?"

"Shut up! I'm not sure if you have noticed it. Both the grapeshot guns used by the Special Unit of Strategies and Tactics and the Mark I type HMGs operated by the Gun Battalion are equipped with an air duct for steady firing," Van'er said meditatively. "I've seen many disposed weapons. Although their structures are not always the same, they have pretty much the same mechanism."

"Er... Really? How come I don't know?"

"That's why you aren't the commander," Rodney said sagely while twitching his lips. "Having said that, we would need manpower and supplies to create weapons. Sir Iron Axe doesn't charge the plant that manufactures weapons."

"No, we aren't making weapons from scratch but are simply upgrading the ones we currently have," Van'er said, feeling more confident about what he was saying. "It won't involve the plant or the Administrative Office. We just need a skillful worker."

Cat's Claw, Rodney and Nelson all rested their eyes on Jop.

Jop sighed deeply and raised his hands. "Fine. My brother is working in the industrial zone. His job is to process and assemble steam engines. I'll take you there tomorrow."



## Chapter 1208: Van'er's Gun

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The next day at noon, they went to the Second Mechanic Plant in the industrial zone with Jop.

After hearing the purpose of their trip, Jop's brother, Lafite, showed great interest in Van'er's proposal. He took Van'er's rifle and fiddled the weapon affectionately before he asked, "Are we really allowed to do this? I was a miner, and what I'm now doing is simply some manual labor like sharpening and slicing. If I screw it up..."

"Brother!" Jop stopped him indignantly.

"One or two shouldn't be a problem. Guns break easily after all since we use them a lot during the training," Van'er said. "However, if you break a lot, then it means that my method doesn't work. I won't blame you."

"I see," Lafite said while nodding in excitement. "Then leave it to me! I'll do my best, as machine tools in the plant aren't always available."

"Your brother seems to like flintlocks very much," Cat's Claw whispered to Jop.

"That's nothing unusual," Rodney rejoined. "Who doesn't like powerful weapons? We used to flail swords and spears. Now we fire cannons and guns."

Van'er also thought the same way. After witnessing the true power of the 12-pound field artillery, he gradually fell in love with weapons. Van'er opened the leather bag his friends brought with them, took out a disabled HMG and then handed a metal tube to Lafite. Van'er said, "Let's begin."

...

The barrel of the rifle was soon fixed to a drilling machine.

Lafite turned on the machine, aligned the drill with the mark on the barrel, and slowly moved the drill downwards. When the drill touched the barrel, the metal tube splintered into numerous tiny chips.

It was a new experience for Van'er. Although he knew that both the steam engine and the Longsong Cannons were made of metal ingots, it was his first time witnessing the actual production. He was amazed when seeing the robust iron gradually melt and dissolve into various shapes.

According to Lafite, the machine tools in the Second Mechanic Plant were all in their third generation powered by Dawn I. Compared to the old machine tools driven by steam engines, the new ones were much more steady and quiet. In addition, they could start working anytime. Some skillful workers could even carve intricate patterns on a tiny iron rod the size of a fingernail.

Yet Van'er did not require such exquisite skills. After reflecting upon his proposal for a night, he redrafted his plan. The principle was to use the least resources to attain his goal. The transformation of the gun should be simple and must not interfere with the daily operation of the plant. As such, he brought the air duct of Mark I, in a hope of simplifying the procedure and saving time.

With a sample air duct, they could then easily ignite gunpowder. The problem, nonetheless, was how to keep up a steady fire.

Van'er had developed a great interest in the HMGs used by the Gun Battalion a long time ago. During the war of the North Slope, he had played with those machine guns many times. One thing that Van'er was certain was that Mark I was much larger than rifles because it had a much more complicated recoil system. Further, the loading systems of the two weapons were also quite different. Machine guns required a cartridge, whereas rifles were only equipped with a clip. Therefore, it was impossible to copy the whole model.

Even if his method worked, Iron Axe and Brian would not allow the artillery to use heavy machine gun parts.

The best way to upgrade rifles was to just upgrade the barrel.

"That's pretty much it..." Lafite said as he cleansed the drill and compared the air duct and the rifle against the sunlight. "These two barrels should be about the same length once we cut off the excessive part."

"Don't connect them as yet," Van'er stopped Lafite as he produced a piece of paper from his pocket and spread it out. "I want you to help me to make this spare part as well."

There was a crude diagram on the paper. The part was in the shape of an arc, about one finger long and two fingers wide, with a groove in the middle.

"What's that?" the other officers asked curiously. "It doesn't look like a gun part."

Van'er was not sure if this part would really work. It was simply one of his wild ideas that had yet been verified. However, he must not retract, so he said, "Ahem... if everything goes well, I believe this new part will replace our hands."

...

Five days later, many soldiers from the Artillery Battalion gathered at the First Army's shooting range.

They had learned from their superiors that a new flintlock that would enable the artillery to keep up a steady fire was currently under test. Unlike all the other weapons widely used by the army, this weapon was invented by Commander Van'er instead of His Majesty. Many soldiers were intrigued by the news and came to see what this new weapon looked like during their break.

To their dismay, the weapon under test could indeed fire steadily, although it did, from time to time, get jammed. As long as the user continuously pulled the trigger, the gun could eject

multiple bullets at a time.

Unlike the revolving rifles that could only fire five bullets, this upgraded one could fire 20, which would almost rival an HMG if multiple such upgraded guns fired at the same time.

"I can't believe that you really made it," Cat's Claw remarked impressively. "Now I know why Sir Iron Axe chose you to be the commander."

"His Majesty taught me all this. Doesn't he always say that we need to apply what we learn from books to actual work? I simply did what His Majesty told us to," Van'er said triumphantly. He had not expected that his plan would work so well. Within just five days, he had created a new weapon. Next, they would only need to make a few adjustments and the Artillery Battalion would be able to increase the power of their guns significantly at a minimal cost.

"Are you Commander Van'er?" someone asked suddenly.

"Yes, you are..." Van'er said as he turned around.

"I'm Danny, a member of the sniper team," the man said with a smile. "I saw a lot of people here, so I came to see what's going on. I'm on duty today... Can I try out your new weapon?"

"The sniper team?" Jop echoed, a little surprised, and then cast a glance at Van'er, "Chief — "

Van'er knew that every single member of the sniper team was an elite picked by Brian from the Gun Battalion. The sniper team made its fame through the battle against the church at the Coldwind Ridge. They received a medal from His Majesty for their outstanding performance. They were the best among the best and were also highly respected among the soldiers. If this new weapon caught the attention of the sniper team, wouldn't there be a possibility that the Artillery Battalion could finally overpower the Gun Battalion?

In response to Jop and Cat's Claw's eager look, Van'er replied

with a faint smile, "Of course. Please go ahead."

# Chapter 1209: Testing Result

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Danny took the gun and instantly noticed that the center of the gravity had changed. The gun was, overall, heavier than a regular rifle. Apart from the second tube installed to the barrel, this new gun looked no different than an ordinary bolt rifle used by most of the soldiers in the Gun Battalion, although it was not as well-made as his own high-precision rifle. The biggest change was that this additional metal tube ran all the way to the bottom of the barrel and was connected to the bolt.

This must be the reason that the gun could keep up a steady fire.

Danny took the aim and pulled the trigger. However, instead of locking his eyes on the muzzle, he gazed at the iron tube on one side of the barrel.

As the gun trembled when the bullet escaped from the muzzle, something extraordinary happened. It was just a split second, but Danny noticed the change in the bolt. The rod in the iron tube was pushed forward and then retracted along with the metal shard attached to its end.

This metal shard was normally fixed to the bolt. If someone tried to forcibly pull it, it would get jammed and break the rod. However, the groove in the middle of the shard enabled the bolt to retract and thereby unlock it.

Then, the whole process reversed. The rod retracted to the tube and the bolt returned to its original spot. The metal shard slid back to the bottom and locked the bore again.

This was such an ingenious design!

This additional part was quite self-explanatory. Even a lay man like Danny could immediately understand the mechanism behind it. Basically, the rod in the second iron tube replaced manual labor. What was clever about this design was that the rod completed four

steps at a time, namely, pushing, pulling, lifting and pressing. Without any external force, the gun was automatically restored.

Danny fired all the bullets, mesmerized by the pungent smell of gunpowder and that familiar voice that always visited him on the battlefield.

"You missed one shot out of 20," Malt said. "Not used to the new weapon?"

"I haven't got used to it yet. See if I miss any in the next round."

"See what?" a surprised voice said to him.

Danny pulled himself back to the present. He suddenly realized that this was not a battlefield, and a group of onlookers were watching him in the shooting range. Danny looked toward the confused Artillery Battalion commander as he rose and said while shaking his head, "No... I'm just mumbling."

"You're really an excellent sniper. 19 out of 20. That's really something, and you're still not satisfied," Van'er said while patting Danny on the shoulder. He then asked hopefully, "So... what do you think of this gun?"

Danny knew about the competition between the Artillery Battalion and the Gun Battalion. Nevertheless, both of the two battalions served the king. He thus said honestly, "It's perfect, except it's a little unstable and heavy. I wish the sniper team could also have an upgraded weapon like this, if possible."

If truth be told, the gun was as accurate as regular rifles when shooting targets were at 50 and 100 meters. Although it was a lot heavier than a rifle, the sniper team and the Artillery Battalion were not required to fire on standby or carry the weapon on the go."

The greatest strength of this upgraded gun was that it enabled soldiers to keep up a steady fire. Since the current gun could not fire steadily, soldiers had to readjust their position and took the

aim again after they missed their target. The repositioning normally took a few seconds, and more often than not, they lost track of the target. Therefore, they fired less frequently than ordinary soldiers. However, the upgraded gun minimized the readjustment and enabled soldiers to fire again immediately. This weapon would thus be very helpful for a massive warfare.

Van'er was pleased to hear that his work received some kind of acknowledgment. He grinned, "It's just a preliminary design. If you could help us further improve the weapon, I would feel more comfortable when I talk to Sir Iron Axe."

Van'er believed if the sniper team used the gun designed by the Artillery Battalion, then surely he outperformed Brian.

Danny, on the other hand, agreed to help Van'er purely out of his person affection toward firearms that could efficiently kill demons, the smell of gunpowder, and the voice of his ghost friend, Malt. Danny thus said, "I'm happy to be of service, Mr. Commander."

The two of them smiled at each other and reached an agreement.

...

Roland learned about this new weapon a few days later.

As an increasing number of soldiers from the Artillery Battalion visited the Second Mechanic Plant, the superintendent of the plant reported the incident to the Administrative Office, who later forwarded the news to the Minister of Engineering, Anna.

Roland was greatly amused by the duplicate sample created by Anna. The design was crude. Although the gun could fire steadily, it would easily break down since the additional metal tube was exposed in the air. The gun thus required extensive maintenance.

Having said that, the artillery, after all, did not need to fire very frequently.

"What do you think?" Anna asked smilingly.



"Well... there's a lot that can be done, but it's a good sign," Roland said casually. "At least, it shows that soldiers start to think independently and know what kind of weapon they really need. The strengths of this gun are also very obvious, which are minimal costs and simple alteration."

There would certainly be a huge increase in the consumption of bullets if the whole army started to use this new weapon. Fortunately, frontline soldiers who mainly relied on HMGs did not necessarily need to fire successively.

Well, in that case, let's help them," Anna said, nodding.

The design of the weapon was soon finalized with Anna's assistance. The bolt and piston were replaced by a more flexible latch structure. Its joint was encased in a shell to stabilize the weapon, so the gun would not get easily jammed. After a part of the air duct was cut off, the weapon was officially upgraded. Roland advised that the new rifle should be named after Van'ér.

Soon after the news was announced, the Ministry of Engineering suddenly received tons of recommendations and feedback.

Roland was pleased with the turn of the event.

He finally saw the result of universal education.

The success of his education plan excited Roland even more than the new weapon itself.

Also, there was another piece of good news.

Celine told him that there was a breakthrough in the research of the Magic Ceremony Cube.

She found a way to significantly reduce the consumption of uranium when she was making the sixth batch of cube replicates.

# Chapter 1210: A Cube-Powered Vehicle

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In the underground laboratory in the Third Border City

Roland immediately took Anna to the laboratory. Through the thick protection glass, he saw two activated Magic Ceremony Cubes at the center of the laboratory. The wall of the laboratory was plastered with lead plates. One of the Cubes looked quite normal while the other ejected much shorter red laser beams.

"Is the one that ejects shorter red light the new replicate?" Anna asked perceptively.

"That's right. Actually, it was purely an accident," Celine replied brightly. "Normally, Slimwrist carves the patterns on the parts. If the materials are damaged, then it won't be easy to duplicate the patterns, so we normally dispose those damaged stones. However, a week ago when Slimwrist was carving Part No. 236, we found the stone crack, which means this specific part is defective."

Roland asked meditatively, "But you didn't throw No. 236 away?" As all the materials used to create duplicates were collected from the Southernmost Region, and since those tablets had been buried underground for 1,000 years, it was normal to have damage here and there.

Celine tapped her main tentacle and said, "I thought it would be a waste to throw it away, so I kept it just in case. Then I installed it on the Magic Cube previously made to see whether it would function properly."

Roland looked at Celine incredulously. That was a nuclear torture device!

"Don't worry, Your Majesty," Celine said as if seeing the thought in Roland's mind. She raised her blobbed head and continued, "I conducted the test in the Impassable Mountain Range. Nothing would happen to Neverwinter even if something went terribly

wrong. This is a principle followed by the members of the Quest Society. You don't need to feel sad for me in the event I'm killed. For the sake of truth, I really can't care less about my personal safety..."

Looking at eloquent Celine, Roland realized his concern was unnecessary. He thus said, "Now, your finding!"

"Ahem, sorry," Celine said while clearing her throat. "Anyway, just as what you've seen, the Magic Cube could still be activated, although the range of the red beam shortened by 90%. However, the tri-tank magic power unit could still transmit energies. I conducted a heating test to see whether the shortened red beam affected heat transmission. It took me two to three days to complete the test. When I examined the uranium chip, I was amazed to find that it did not change much. Also, it appears that much less magic power was consumed when the range of the red beam shortened."

Anna asked thoughtfully, "So, most of the magic power was used to maintain the red beam?"

"I now understand why you became a Senior Witch even faster than Agatha," Celine praised. "It took me quite a while to reach the same conclusion. If that beam is comprised of numerous tiny particles, it'll be hard to direct them all to the same spot. The experiment indicated that the heat transmission on the front, left and right sides wouldn't be affected as long as you didn't touch the red beam. Therefore, I conclude that the decrease in the laser range did save a lot of power."

"Hang on," Roland interrupted suddenly. "This means that Part No. 236 determines the radiation range?"

This was definitely a major discovery even more important than the sustainability of the power system. There were around more than 300 parts in one Magic Ceremony Cube. Nobody knew how magic power worked through those patterned stones. Now, there

seemed to be a solution to analyze the power within the cube.

"Yes," Celine assented, a twinge of excitement in her voice. "Perhaps the patterns on each part have a specific function. If we could decipher those patterns, we could probably understand how magic power worked within the Magic Ceremony Cube."

"Each part functions differently. It looks like the radiation clan shared the same mindset with us," Anna said with a smile. "Aren't we lucky?"

"Of course," Roland confirmed with a nod. He knew what Anna meant. Civilizations varied drastically in terms of language, mindset and appearance. It was almost impossible to find a similar one to learn from. The underground civilization, for example, could only operate the core device after transferring the soul to a carrier. Celine had spent hundreds of years trying to understand its mechanism, but the research was fruitless.

Therefore, each civilization, in a way, was lonely.

Although Roland had promised earlier that human beings could still learn from lost civilizations without the legacy shards, it was actually not easy to do so, especially when there was no guidance or assistance available. How could one learn about the other when they had different mindsets?

If Celine was right, then the radiation clan, which was the first civilization that shared some similarity with the human race, might enlighten them on the research of magic power.

"By the way," Anna said as she suddenly grinned at Roland. "Since the magic power unit has been finalized and we have also solved the sustainability problem, isn't it time for you to fulfill your promise?"

Gazing at Anna's bright, blue eyes, Roland found it hard to turn down her request.

"Yes, yes... Your Highness," he said while smiling back. "I'll start

working on it once I'm back to the castle."

...

The dawn broke with loud noises.

Soraya sat up from her bed in a daze.

She yawned dramatically and fumbled for her clothes. These were the noises produced by steam engines that she heard every morning. They marked the beginning of another busy day.

But she noticed it was particularly early today. Soraya cast a glance at Echo who was still deep in her sleep, and put on her clothes quietly. She wondered who else in the castle got up earlier than her.

Then Soraya suddenly realized that this was not the industrial zone. Why were there noises of steam engines. It was weekend today, and most of the witches slept in. The castle would be empty until it was time for lunch. Was she dreaming?

The roar started again outside the window, and Soraya heard someone talk and laugh sprightly.

"This is so interesting!"

"Your Majesty, let me try it."

"Me too, me too!"

"What happened?" Echo asked blearily as she rose.

"I don't know. It's probably Mystery Moon..." Soraya said as she stretched and pulled back the thick curtains. Sunlight spilled across the room through the window. It was actually not early anymore.

After she became more comfortable with the sudden brightness, she peered down from her window and was surprised at what she saw.

Many witches were congregated at the castle gate, staring at

something at the center of the yard, looking excited.

Soraya then saw Anna sitting in a peculiar four-wheeled carriage. There were no horses, but the vehicle ran on its own. Anna's face split into a big smile.

Immediately, Soraya's eyes were glued to the strange vehicle.

# Chapter 1211: A Farming Tractor

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"Your Majesty, Your Majesty, what's Lady Anna driving?"

Roland turned around and saw Echo and Soraya rush toward him.

"It's a car, a Magic Cube-powered car!" Mysterious Moon supplied the answer fervently. "If you want to drive it, go line up."

"A... car?" Soraya echoed, "A car powered by a steam engine?"

"Yup, but the boiler of the steam engine has been replaced by the relic of the radiation clan, so that's why it's so small," Mystery Moon boasted. "It's still a lot larger than an electric motor though. I wish it could be powered by Dawn I. That'll be perfect... No, then we should call it a magnet-driven car!"

'You can barely manage to work with dozens of copper rods,' Lily retorted while twitching her lips. "And now you want to power a car?"

"Er..." Mystery Moon faltered. "I, I just came of age, so obviously I'm not that powerful. Perhaps I could manufacture tons of Dawn I after I upgrade."

"I would rather put my hope in Miss Doris," Lily said scathingly.

"Shut up, or I'll take away all your Chaos Drinks!"

"I dare you — "

"Haha..." Phyllis burst into a laughter. "Actually, no matter it's powered by steam or electricity, we still call it a 'car'."

"Really?" All the other witches said together while looking toward her.

"Yes, in the Dream World, it's called a car," Phyllis replied triumphantly. "The cars in the Dream World are much better than this one Her Highness is now driving. They could not only shelter us from rain and wind, but they're also equipped with an advanced

heating and air-conditioning system. It's pretty much like a mobile house, and it's a lot faster than horses!"

"Have you... driven a car before?" Mystery Moon asked, her eyes widening in curiosity.

"Of course," Phyllis bragged. "I once drove His Majesty's vehicle on an endless highway. The vehicle literally trembled when I drove at the maximum speed. I could only hear wind howling around me, and I felt I could conquer the whole world!"

Roland mopped his forehead, amazed that Phyllis could drive his battered mini van in the same manner as she drove a luxurious sports car. The truth was that his vehicle had poor noise insulation and it always wobbled violently on highways.

Nevertheless, even the old mini van functioned better than this cube-powered vehicle.

It had taken Roland only four days to complete the production. The vehicle was comprised of a steam engine at the front, a heating system at the rear, a power unit attached to the automobile frame, and a couch in the middle. Apart from a steering wheel, a clutch and a brake, the vehicle had no gearbox but only a valve next to the seat to adjust the speed.

Once the Magic Ceremony Cube heated up the water and set the steam engine in motion, the vehicle would start to move. As the air pressure in the conduits increased, the vehicle accelerated. Then the driver could switch the valve on to release some steam so that the steam engine would not overload. In this way, the driver adjusted the speed of the vehicle.

In other words, the driver simply needed to press on the brake and the clutch to slow down and release the brake to accelerate. Due to the high air pressure, the spinning cogwheel might sustain some extent of damage. Therefore, once the vehicle came to a complete stop, the driver must open the valve to release the steam and reduce the air pressure in the steam engine.



Despite the cubersome power unit, the primitive automobile frame, and the crude steering device, Anna was over the moon. Like a little girl who had just received the best present in the world, she drove around the yard with the slightest intention of taking a rest.

In addition to Anna, the other witches were also aroused by the vehicle. They exchanged excited murmurs. It was the first time they laughed so heartily after the battle of Taquila.

Roland wished Tilly could share this happiness.

Nightingale told him that Tilly invested most of her time in training aerial knights, so she rarely came to the castle lately. Perhaps, for Tilly, the happiest thing was to defeat the demons.

When Anna finally alighted from the vehicle and asked who would like to try out, all the witches pressed forward to take the share.

Sylvie, who was the first to arrive at the scene and spot the car, got the opportunity to drive.

"How do you like it," Roland asked Anna.

"It's more fun than I thought," Anna replied with a smile. "Thank you, Roland. I'm so glad that you taught me how to drive."

Roland dazed for a second as he saw Anna's face split into a dazzling smile. He quickly averted his eyes, a little embarrassed, as though he had suddenly traveled back to the time when they had first met. Roland said, "Well, I'm glad you like it."

Anna blinked and said, "By the way, Celine found a way to stabilize the Magic Ceremony Cube. Does it mean that we could use the Cube in the Battle of Divine Will?"

"Technically, we could," Roland replied on a cough and pulled himself together. "We just need to keep supplying water to make sure that the cube-powered steam engine works. Time will tell how much this new steam engine could help with the logistics."

"Can we use the steam engine to create an armored war machine with a Longsong Cannon anchored to the top?" Phyllis cut in. "If you could make such a weapon, then we don't have to be afraid of the Spider Demons anymore."

It was true that a competent power unit would make an armored unit possible. With a powerful tank, they could instantly dominate the war. Even the crudest tank could easily repulse Mad Demons and block spears and bone needles ejected by Spidery Monstrous Beasts. It was a weapon as well as a defense.

Nevertheless, extensive research was required to create such an advanced weapon. Not only did they have to improve technologies, but they have to also educate workers. Anna could not manufacture the biplanes and the armored weapons at the same time, it was also unrealistic to directly create a tank. In short, considering the limited technologies and resources, most of the work had to be completed by plant workers.

The first project that came to Roland's mind, however, was not a tank or an infantry fighting vehicle but a transportation tool for civil services.

This transportation tool could considerably increase farming efficiency while saving a lot of manpower. As the principle and technologies applied to this transportation tool were quite similar to those related to armored vehicles, Roland could also, at the same time, provide soldiers with some training. Meanwhile, workers in the plant could also immediately start to produce armored weapons, if necessary.

This transportation tool was — a tractor.

# Chapter 1212: Rainbow Stone

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"Ahhh! Help! I can't steer it around. Someone help me!"

A piercing shriek interrupted Roland's train of thought. Roland looked up and saw the vehicle dash toward the flower bed at the center of the yard. In the vehicle sat Mystery Moon.

"You, you idiot!" Lily said through clenched teeth. "Hit the brake!"

"I did... but it doesn't work, ahhhh!" Mystery Moon screamed in terror.

The car ran wild. It bounced off the flower bed and streaked toward the castle gate.

"Your Majesty, watch out!" Wendy shouted.

There was instantly a great commotion.

"Holy crap," Roland said within himself, gaping at Mystery Moon who steered the vehicle frantically with her eyes clamp shut. He was astonished that a car without gas could go so wrong. What a monstrous driver Mystery Moon was!

Much to Roland's consternation, the crowd was not dispersed. All the witches, on the contrary, stopped in front of the car. In a second, all the witches applied their various abilities. Anna summoned a Blackfire wall; Lotus created a ditch to separate Roland from the yard; Iffy summoned her Magic Cage, and Andrea was about to shoot her Light Arrow; Nightingale grabbed Roland by the arm, ready to drag him into the mist anytime.

In the end, Phyllis and Lorgar stopped the vehicle by force.

They grasped the bumper of the vehicle and lifted the car off the ground.

Then Anna turned down the Magic Ceremony Cube with her Blackfire.

The steam engine was immediately silenced.

"Ahhhhh! Run, guys!" Mystery Moon yelled hysterically, her hand still on the steering wheel.

"You BIG THICKHEAD!" Lily strode across the ditch and slammed her hand on the back of Mystery Moon's head. Her scream instantly perished into a grumble.

Mystery Moon opened her eyes, her hands on her head, looking perfectly innocent.

"Mystery Moon!"

Seeing Wendy and Scroll dart in her direction in a hot rage, Mystery Moon realized that she had made a big mistake. She pleaded, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry —" But it was too late. She had been dragged out of the vehicle and into the castle before she could justify her behavior.

"You always cause trouble!"

"No time off for you this week!"

"I order you to copy the rules of the Witch Union 100 times!"

"And you also have to complete five sets of homework before dinner!"

Mystery Moon's cry reverberated across the whole yard. All the witches shuddered at the long murmur of echoes, except Anna.

"I examined the vehicle. There's nothing wrong with the steering wheel or the brake," Anna said to Roland. "There's only one reason why Mystery Moon lost control."

"What's that?"

"She's not strong enough to maneuver the car," Anna said with a magnificently forgiving air.

Roland laughed at such an amusing truth. It appeared those who were weaker than Mystery Moon probably could not drive the car

unless he installed an assisting mechanism to the steering wheel and the brake.

Lotus and Anna soon fixed the yard. Looking at a group of witch who was not able to disguise their eagerness, Roland said while shaking his head, "If you still want to go on a ride, then talk to Anna. As long as she agrees, I don't have any objections. Just make sure that you don't destroy the castle. Right, another thing. Don't forget to come back for lunch."

"Yes, Your Majesty!"

"Please let me have a go first!"

"Hey, I came here before you!"

The yard was again alive with laughters.

...

"Sir, it's here."

A carriage staggered to a halt in front of a tavern. Victor Lothar alighted from the wagon and tossed two silver royals at the coachman before he got in.

"Mr. Victor!" a pretty young lady in a white robe greeted him at a trot. She took the luggage from Victor and said ardently, "We keep the room for you. Please, this way."

Victor's room was the largest one on the top floor. Everything was just as the same as when he had departed last time, including incenses, grape wines and his personal maid, Tinkle.

Victor nodded in satisfaction. This was the power of money. Although it could not bring the dead to life, it could freeze time.

"It has been a while since last time you were here," Tinkle said as she pulled back the curtains, opened the window and poured him a cup of tea. "My boss thought you encountered bandits or died in a shipwreck. He asked the accountant to check the gold royals you left here every day to see how long we can keep the room for you."

He wants to let out this room to someone else but at the same time doesn't want to break Neverwinter contract law. It's really amusing to see that he was caught in such a disgusting dilemma."

Victor felt his fatigue gradually dissipated as he listened to his maid babbling. He asked, "Aren't you afraid that he'll know that you badmouth him behind his back?"

Tinkle stuck out her tongue and said, "Unless you tell him. By the way, where have you been? Was it a great undertaking?"

"Well, sort of," Victor said while sipping the tea. "I spent most of my time in the Southern Territory in the past half a year."

"The Southern Territory?" Tinkle echoed in confusion, her head lopsided. "That area isn't famous for gemstones, is it?"

"There are gemstones everywhere, provided that you know where to find them," Victor said, shrugging. "For example, in the south, gemstones grow on trees."

"Sir, you must be making fun of me," the maid said a little indignantly.

Victor smiled. He knew Tinkle would not believe him. In fact, he could not believe it either before he actually saw it. The cotton field was, to his surprise, even more beautiful than gemstones. The plants cultivated by Leaf were incredible. The cotton was large and soft like snow, completely different from the one he used to see.

Victor had been busy in the past few months. He summoned all the tailors in his native town, built a plant at the Port of Clearwater, and hired staff to work for him. Once the harvest season was over, he started to sell the cotton to the public. His business was better than he had initially anticipated. As this new cotton was affordable and high-quality, they soon outstripped their competitors. All his products were fairly popular, from cotton blankets all the way to cotton winter jackets.

Nevertheless, Victor knew that competition always existed. He

knew when other merchants also started to purchase cotton seeds from Leaf, his market would inevitably shrink a little bit. Therefore, apart from common cotton fabrics, he also produced high-end commodities, which were mainly clothes tailored to wealthy customers. All the clothes were carefully designed and made, with a tiny logo of a colorful gemstone at sleeves and collars that marked the uniqueness of his products.

Those clothes were soon acknowledged by a certain group of people and were subsequently called "Rainbow Stone".

Victor thus also granted the same logo to his low-end products such as blankets and robes, only that the logo is monochrome.

Victor predicted that even if other merchants sold their products at a lower price than his, people would still tend to buy his products because of the Rainbow Stone logo. Just like jewelry, nobles always preferred to purchase those processed by masters over the ones that were not.

"How long are you going to stay here this time," Tinkle asked after a long silence.

"Probably three or four days. I have a lot to do in the Southern Territory," Victor replied.

"That soon?" the maid asked in a low voice.

Victor understood that Tinkle would have to serve other customers if he decided to surrender the tenancy. She preferred to clean a vacant room than serving customers. Victor did not really care about the possible change, but he did like Tinkle to serve him.

He had not got tired of her yet.

"Don't worry. I'll pay a good amount of gold royals before I return to Neverwinter."

"Really?" Tinkle said, her face lighting up.

"That isn't much, really," Victor said while straightening up and

tossed a gold royal at Tinkle. "This is your pay. I need to pay a visit to the Administrative Office. Lead the way."



# Chapter 1213: The Beginning of an Enterprise

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Over the past six months, although Victor Lothar had stayed in the Southern Territory, he had paid close attention to Neverwinter, for he believed that this city would undoubtedly become the central city of the world in the future. The impact of this future capital would extend to not only Graycastle but also the other three kingdoms and the Fjords. Therefore, Victor asked his men to purchase Graycastle Weekly and send a copy to the Port of Clearwater every day.

He returned to Neverwinter because of two major events that had caught his attention. One was the sale of the Miracle Building and the other was the release of a new magic movie, "The Dust of History".

Victor did not understand why the King of Graycastle insisted that Neverwinter people had to show their identification cards to purchase the apartment. As a Neverwinter resident, he could still travel to the Port of Clearwater and the City of Glow. Victor did not know what the point of having a Neverwinter Identification Card. He was a merchant and basically traveled the world all the year around.

Nevertheless, nobody would miss the opportunity to become a resident of the tallest apartment building on this continent situated at the center of the new king's city. It was a perfect marketing strategy to further promote his brand, "Rainbow Stone".

However, even if Victor failed to obtain a room in the Miracle Building, he would not feel too regretted about it. As the designated distributor of the new cotton seeds appointed by King Roland, Victor was confident that he could outperform all other merchants. For him, he was interested more in the magic movie

than the real estate transaction.

He would never forget the first magic movie he had seen.

It was mind-blowing.

The moment the curtains had been pulled back, Victor had felt his physical body melt into nothingness, his soul wandering in the darkness. He had watched "The Wolf Princess" many times, and would have watched over and over again had he not decided to grow cotton in the Southern Territory.

Victor had the faintest clue as to the content of the new magic movie "The Dust of History". However, he was particularly intrigued by the movie because of two reasons. One was that all the actors in the movie were from the Star Flower Troupe, and the other was that the screenwriter this time was famous Kajen Fels.

According to the introduction of the movie, it was based on a true story, and King Roland had even provided assistance with the background research. It was rumored that the king had disclosed a book that had been kept as a secret by the royal family for generations. Victor knew he should not take these rumors circulated among the public too seriously. The best way to confirm the validity of the information was to watch the magic movie himself. How could he miss it?

This was actually the main reason Victor came back to Neverwinter.

As soon as Victor reached the Administrative Office, Tinkle went to line up to purchase the tickets. Each ticket cost 50 gold royals, which was 10 gold royals more than the ticket for "The Wolf Princess". However, Victor immediately gave Tinkle 100 gold royals and asked her to buy two tickets.

Tinkle felt a surge of pride. Many people eyed her as she bought two tickets at a time. The price for the premiere was so daunting that even foreign merchants would hesitate for a while before

making the decision. In fact, the ticket would be a lot cheaper the next day, and the price would further drop to 10 silver royals for civilians a week later.

The transaction of the apartment was much more complicated. After Victor submitted the application, he and Tinkle were led into a small cabin.

"I can't believe that you have a Neverwinter Identification Card!" Tinkle said in a hushed voice. "But you aren't a Graycastle man, and certainly aren't a resident of Border Town either."

Victor said, shrugging, "You've forgotten that one could become a Neverwinter resident as soon as he purchases a property here."

"Of course I know!" Tinkle defended herself. "But you always live in the tavern..."

"That doesn't prevent me from having a real estate property here," Victor said airily. "I prefer a tavern to a residential area, but I can still buy a property just in case."

"..." Tinkle was speechless, her eyes wide open.

Victor thought that was the beauty of a country girl. If Tinkle were a lady, she would have probably viewed him as an idiot.

Just then, a young lady in a uniform came in. "Hello, thanks for waiting. My name is Betty. I'm a clerk at the Administrative Office, and I'll be responsible for registration."

"I'm..."

"Victor Lothar. I reviewed your application, and you're eligible to make a purchase." Betty said quickly, "I have to admit that you have a really good taste. Out of all the residential buildings, you picked the Miracle Building. This is the landmark of Neverwinter. You can have a birdview of the whole city. Although the price is a little high, it's definitely worth it!"

Mildly taken aback, Victor suddenly had a strange feeling that

not many people were buying. He thus cleared his throat and asked, "So, how much is it?"

"Here it is, Mr. Victor," Betty said as she handed him a piece of paper.

Victor spread it open, a muscle twitching around his lips. The prices of all the floors of the Miracle Building were listed. The first five floors were under 100 gold royals. From the fifth floor onward, the price doubled by each floor. The 14th Floor was listed as 2,000 gold royals.

Tinkle clapped his hand over his mouth.

"The 15th floor is not for sale?" Victor asked as he noticed the floor was not priced.

"The Astrology Association and the Alchemist Workshop have jointly bought the 15th floor. I've heard they're planning to found a Society of Sage and make it as the headquarters — "

"I'll take the 14th floor!" Victor cut across Betty, who looked as aghasted as Tinkle. He then added, "I'll take two."

4,000 gold royals was a large sum of money even for Victor. He had been hesitating at first, but after hearing the news of the Society of Sage, he immediately made up his mind.

If Neverwinter was the central city of the future, then this so-called headquarters would definitely influence the entire kingdom. If he could associate his business to these two eminent organizations, it would be very helpful to further promote his products, even though what he did was simply sharing the same building with the two societies.

"A wise choice, Mr. Victor!" Betty said while holding Victor's hand in excitement. "I'll bring the contract right away. Once you sign, the two rooms will be yours."

Watching Betty rush out of the room, Victor heaved a deep sigh and said, "I somehow feel that she is the buyer not me..."

"It probably has something to do with her sales target," Twinkle mumbled.

"What's that?"

"I heard about it from customers coming to the tavern. It appears that every official and clerk in the Administrative Office is subject to periodical evaluations. I don't know about the details, but the evaluation determines whether they could get a raise or get promoted."

"I see... Now I see why everyone here works so hard," Victor muttered. This was something new he could learn from.

Perhaps, he could also implement a similar system in his textile mill.

"By the way..." Tinkle said hesitantly. "You aren't leaving the rooms vacant, are you? You spent so much money on them. So, are you still living in the tavern?"

"I'll continue to live there," Victor said smilingly. "But the rooms I bought with 4,000 gold royals won't be vacant either."

"But you can't live in two places at the same time."

"It doesn't mean I'm going to use it as a residence. I'm planning to make it as the new headquarters of Lorthar Corporation, the headquarters for 'Rainbow Stone'." In the beginning, Victor had only planned to purchase one room and hang a banner outside to advertise "Rainbow Stone", but Betty's words inspired him. He could use the room for something else.

# Chapter 1214: The Second Magic Movie

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Two days later, Victor went to the movie theatre.

The premiere of the movie "The Dust of History" was at 3:00 PM. He arrived at the theatre pretty early and waited to check in. The movie theatre had expanded a great deal since his last visit a year ago. There were not only several new movie halls but also a yard and a waiting area for customers. Although Victor came here half an hour early, the hall had been packed when he got here.

"Are you Mr. Gammon from the Chamber of Commerce of the Crescent Moon Bay? Nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you too. I didn't expect to meet such a successful businessman from the Kingdom of Dawn like you."

"Are they actors from Kajen's troupe? I wonder if I could meet Kajen himself."

"Please present me to him if you ever get a chance."

"Sure thing."

The audience started to make conversations. As Victor had expected, those who could afford the premiere were all prominent figures. This was also one of the benefits to attend the premiere.

"Hey, aren't you Mr. Victor? I've heard that you're no longer in the jewelry trade, are you?" someone said to him abruptly.

"I'm still doing my old trade, but the business isn't good at the moment."

"I like your blankets. More customers come to my hotel after I use your products. I would like to order 100 more."

"I'm glad to hear that. We could have a chat after the magic movie."

"Sounds good."

Tinkle's eyes were wide open as she listened to their conversation. To her, it was unimaginable to suddenly have such a big order over a casual chat. When Victor was finally alone, she tugged his sleeve and asked, "Sir, are these people coming here for the movie or business? I notice many of them don't really know you. Aren't you afraid that they're frauds?"

"Don't worry. It's very common among entrepreneurs. Just get used to it," Victor said smilingly. Only successful businessmen were financially capable of attending this grand premiere. To some extent, this premiere told more about their financial status than any jewelry they were wearing, because the theatre experience was, essentially, an intangible service that would not give audience any monetary benefits.

While Victor was explaining to Tinkle, someone bumped into him.

"Ah... sorry," Victor apologized. However, he was rooted to the ground after he saw the woman.

It was a lifeless face, although quite pretty. Perhaps, the lady would have been even prettier than Tinkle had she put on some makeup. Nevertheless, her pale skin and absent look abhorred him. The sullen expression that the woman was wearing formed a glaring contrast with the animated atmosphere in the hall.

The woman did not say anything but simply cast him an indifferent glance before she drifted off.

"What a weird person..." Victor mumbled.

"Sir, the magic movie is starting in a minute. Let's get in," Tinkle, who apparently had not noticed anything, urged while grasping Victor's hand.

"Right... yes," Victor said. He soon put the lady out of his mind and followed Tinkle into the hall.

...

"What happened just now?" Joe asked Farrina a little apprehensively.

"Nothing," Farrina answered in a low voice. "Someone bumped into me. Let's go. Since you brought me here, let's just get in."

"R-right," Joe stammered, not sure whether he should hold Farrina's hand, and finally decided not to do so. "Remember that you shall stay with me, no matter what happens."

Farrina remained silent. This was the best she could do to come here with him.

After staying in Neverwinter for nearly half a year, Farrina gradually came to the realization that the ancient witch who claimed to have been living for 400 years did not lie to her. Her wounds slowly healed up. Although the whip and brand marks persisted, she could at least walk on her own. Farrina found herself have nothing to complain about. Had she fallen into any pure witches' hands, she would have suffered more tortures. Neverwinter witches did treat her fairly well.

However, the trial Farrina had been waiting for did not come. She had not even got a chance to meet the King of Graycastle. Farrina was simply questioned by dozens of people. She had even lied, in an attempt to provoke the interrogators, but they simply gave her a searching look with an air of derision.

After Farrina was released from the prison, Joe bought a house to settle her down. Unlike her, Joe, as a former noble, soon found a job at the Administrative Office and quickly adapted to the new environment. If truth be told, Joe should not have been a church member in the first place. However, the life in Neverwinter tormented Farrina. The longer Farrina lived in Neverwinter, the more she realized how wrong the church had been. The witches were not the representation of evil. Apart from magic power, they were no different from ordinary people. Roland Wimbledon did not turn the city into hell with the power of witches but instead



made people's life even better.

Farrina was torn between her belief that she had been indebted for half of her life and the glaring reality. Perhaps, this was the trial. Sometimes, it could be more brutal than tortures. She would have ended her own life had Joe not needed her.

Farrina didn't know how long she could live like that. Dimly, she knew the two tickets sent from the Star Flower Troupe would be her last straw. Kajen Fels created this movie on King Roland's request. The sole purpose of this movie was to disclose the truth about the church and thus further secure the dominant position of the Wimbledon Family.

Farrina could imagine that the church would become what everyone loathed after this movie. The sacrifice of Pope Tucker Thor and numerous Judgement Warriors killed in action would then become nothing but a joke.

Farrina did not want this to happen, but she still agreed to come with Joe.

Just as she had not refused the request of the church executives and agreed to stay behind to fight for Hermes.

Because Joe needed her.

Yet this was probably the last thing she could do.

Light gradually faded out.

Darkness fell on the hall, and the magic movie began.

...

The story started on the Hermes Plateau 300 years ago when the New Holy City was simply boulders and rocks. A sheer drop of cliffs, the vast bleakness of the land covered in snow, and the great rapture down the Impassable Mountain Range swarmed into his view.

Although Victor had watched magic movies many times, he was

still quite shocked as the whole continent dwarfed beneath him.

Across the great rapture, many church members were building their new city, as though this was really what had happened 300 years ago.

A moment later, the audience saw a huge hole in the ground. Victor heard the name "Prival Council", which was the most secretive organization of the church. A murmur, at this point, swept over the hall. Victor knew everybody was as surprised and intrigued as him and believed that this was probably the hidden history once only known to the royal family. Soon, the story caught Victor's attention.

It was rumored that a disastrous war broke out every 400 years. When the war started, a bloody moon would appear in the sky, and many enemies would creep out of hell and crush the mankind. For the sake of the human race, witches offered their blood to warriors and obtained incredible power. This was the truth of the God's Punishment Warriors.

To make sure this plan was successful, witches established the church and started to select potential warriors. The main character of this movie was a witch, and she was also the succeder of the current pope. Another main character was the pope's guardian, the commander of the Judgement Army.

Like the majority of plays, the two main characters, after overcoming the initial prejudice and hostility against each other, finally fell in love. The witch and the guardian promised to each other that once there was a succeder to take over the pope position, they would attend the incarnation ceremony for the God's Punishment Army and never part again.

It was such an ingenious stroke that Kajen Fels told this beautiful love story in such an emotional, unobtrusive manner. The excellent performance of the actors from the Star Flower Troupe further moved the audience. Tinkle even wept when she saw the

couple make vows.

However, the situation suddenly turned for the worse. The guardian's father, having a strong desire for power, framed the pope and usurped the throne. The witch, as a candidate for the next pope, naturally became the first obstacle he was going to remove. He thus asked his son to kill the girl, but the guardian refused his request with inflexible determination.

It was a scheme that the usurper had conspired for a long time. When the couple discovered the consipiration, it was too late to change the situation. The couple thus decided to flee Hermes and inform the king situated at the foot of the plateau of this incident. However, the guardian's father sent soldiers to catch them. Apparently, he was determined to kill the young man and the woman.

The movie reached its climax when a battle broke out at the Coldwind Ridge in Graycastle.

A unit of the Judgement Army soon caught up with the witch and the guardian. it seemed that the two unfortunate lovers were doomed.

When the tension between the two parties became almost unbearable, something incredible happened.

"Please, help us! Please!" the guardian yelled, panting, and suddenly turned around. He grasped Victor frantically. Victor felt a coldness steal through him, and he shuddered uncontrollably.

It took him all his efforts not to cry out loud!

"They're there! Get them!"

"Anyone who resists us will be viewed as their accomplices. We're going to kill all of you!" the soldiers shouted, their arms aloft in the air.

"I, I'm not..." Victor said with great difficulties, his throat dry. Words failed him, and the Judgement Warriors had already pulled

the trigger.

An arrow brushed past his cheek!

At the same time, Victor felt a sting.

His hand rubbed on his cheek tremulously and he peered down at this fingers.

There was a faint hint of crimson on them.

# Chapter 1215: The Reoccurrence of the Legend

---

Farrina, surprisingly, found that her last straw had not fallen upon her yet.

It was hanging by a thin thread only a few feet above her.

The story portrayed by the magic movie was very similar to the "truth" disclosed by the ancient witch, only that it did not repudiate the church totally. When Farrina saw the main characters make all their efforts to save the church and shoulder the responsibilities of fighting against the enemies from hell, she felt a warmth long since forgotten wash over her.

Her hand balled into a fist when she saw more than half of the executives conspire against the pope, and had a sudden urge to beat them into the ground.

These people forgot the initial purpose of establishing the church and turned the church into a hideous monster.

What she loathed the most was that these executives kept the existence of demons from the public and people who were dedicated to saving the world like Tucker Thor. These faithful warriors did not die for a noble cause as they had believed. Instead, their death merely became a tool that those obnoxious leaders used to keep a firm grip on power.

Farrina should not have put her faith in a church like that.

She did not understand why the King of Graycastle did not reveal the dark side of the church. Wasn't it a perfect opportunity to further criticize the church and wipe it off people's memories?

Or was it because he had never taken the church seriously?

While Farrina was dealing with a multitude of thoughts in her mind, the soldiers from Hermes caught her attention.

For a person who had completely lost hopes, nothing could really perturb her mind. However, now, Farrina was touched, and her power slowly came back to her.

As one of the best soldiers in the Judgement Army, Farrina could sense even the slightest change in the surroundings.

She felt the ground underneath began to quaver.

The ground shook as the Judgement Army drew near.

Farrina had lived in Hermes for five to six years, so she was familiar with the pattering of horse hooves against the ground. She could instantly tell the number of the soldiers and how far they were without even looking at them.

There were 16 horses, two units of troops.

But she knew her feeling was not real. The magic movie was just an illusional image. Even though it felt so real, it was still not reality. As she was totally merged into the surroundings, all her senses had sharpened.

Farrina realized something had changed!

Then she could again feel her body.

"What happened?"

But something more incredible occurred.

She saw other people who were watching the magic movie rise in front of her.

Including Joe.

"Farrina, what the..." Joe asked blankly as he turned around.

Suddenly, a sense of evil foreboding possessed her. Farrina made an abrupt snatch in the air but caught nothing. The chair underneath her had disappeared.

"Please, help us! Please!" the guardian and the witch pleaded hysterically. They had now noticed the audience and started to run

toward them.

"The traitors are here! Get them!"

"Anyone who resists us will be viewed as their accomplices. We're going to kill all of you!"

A few more arrows cracked through the air, and people at the front fell.

Most viewers were board members of Chambers of Commerce or members of a prominent family who had never experienced a war. For a second, they were all framed to the spot.

"Damn it!" Farrina swore. What were those witches doing? Was she hallucinating? Farrina would have shouted "This is a nasty snare set up by the witches. Everyone, follow me" in the past to calm down the audience. However, she fought down the urge, pushed Joe aside and rushed up to the front before all the audience. She yelled, "Stop! I'm the commander of the Vanguard Battalion of the Judgement Army, Farrina! Who are you?"

The soldiers reined their horses and asked, "The Vanguard Battalion? How come I've never heard of it?"

"Oi, what's your commander's name?"

"The Great Priest of the Prival Council, Sir Tayfun," Farrina lied. In the meantime, she put her hand at her back and gestured the couple to hand her a weapon.

"What?" Hearing Farrina's answer, the leader of the unit hesitated.

The guard wavered as he heard the name "Prival Council". Apparently, this secretive organization had quite a deep influence on church members. Yet Farrina knew it would not completely stop them. The Priest was obviously not as influential as the new throned pope.

She must fight before the other party did!

Unfortunately, the guardian did not really understand her gesture. He simply shuffled toward her with a sword in his hand.

"Why aren't you wearing the armor of the Judgement Army?" the soldier asked as he got off his horse and motioned his men to come with him.

"Because we're on a special mission," Farrina said placidly.

"I'm sorry. I must bring the traitors back to Hermes. This is the pope's order. Also, I must take you as well. I'm sure Sir Tayfun would understand it."

"Is there no alternative?"

"No," the soldier said resolutely while placing his hand on the hilt.

"Alright, I'll come with you," Farrina sighed. "As for Sir Tayfun..."

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's dead — only 300 years later." At these words, Farrina quickly drew out the guardian's sword and thrust it through the unit leader's helmet.

Blood spilled all over her.

"C-captain!"

"Kill them!"

Farrina grabbed the unit leader's weapon and fought fiercely against the other soldiers. The guardian finally realized what was happening and also joined her.

"This woman is — so difficult to deal with!"

"Darn it! Where's my bow? Shoot her!"

"Don't let the witch go!"

It was total chaos. Many people fell to the ground, and the audience goggled at the screen, flabberghasted.



Farrina knew there was no chance of winning since she was not wearing an armor. They had 16 people whereas there were only two of them. It was a matter of time that she got injured.

Soon she was wounded, but the pain searing through her did not slow her down. On the contrary, she fought even more ferociously.

For the first time since she had waken up, Farrina felt contented.

"How dare you defy the church!" the soldiers bellowed.

"The church? No... you don't deserve calling that name!" Farrina said while glaring at them. "It shouldn't have been like that. You destroyed it. You failed us!"

She would soon end up dying here, but somehow, Farrina was satisfied with this ending. In that split second, she had finally become the type of person she wanted to be.

However, death did not come.

A few gun shots cracked through the air over the clatter of swords. Farrina turned around and saw the men in black who had been guarding the yard suddenly appear in the magic movie. Their situation immediately changed. The enemies seemed to be frightened by those reinforcements. They got on their horses and soon disappeared in the mountain range, leaving the bodies of their fellow companions behind.

"Thank you..." said the wounded guardian and the witch as they limped to Farrina. "I thought my father has completely controlled the church, but I didn't expect that there were still loyal warriors like you."

"I thought there was no hope, but God hasn't abandoned us," the witch said while raising her tear-glazed face and smiled at Farrina. "You not only saved us but also the entire human race."

"I..." Farrina opened her mouth but did not know what to say.

"We're going to Graycastle next and tell their king about the coup

that occurred on the Hermes Plateau. We hope it's not too late," the guardian said solemnly. "Run! Never come back to the Holy City again. We'll meet again once the church's mistake is rectified. Take care, my friend!"

Light gradually faded out as the couple disappeared from her view.

When the light was on again, Farrina found herself still sitting in the hall on her chair.

Even her wounds as a result of the battle had disappeared.

Was she really hallucinating?

"Good Lord... this is amazing!" The hall exploded into a tidal wave of applause as the audience came back to the present.

"Good heavens! I feel I'm changing the history..."

"What a brilliant masterpiece. I would be willing to pay 100 gold royals to watch it one more time, let alone 50!"

"You scared the hell out of me when you rushed to the front," Joe said while patting his chest. "It's so amazing to conceive such a story and make it so lifelike..."

Farrina did not answer, but she noticed the men in black looked around nervously with guns in their hands, as though something out of their expectation had happened. Two other theatre staff members dashed to the backstage, looking equally flustered.

This did not look like a great success at all.

Farrina held her breath, trying to figure out what was going on based on the few signs she had discovered. Suddenly, she heard distant explosions and people cry and execrate, but these voices were overpowered by the heated discussion in the hall.

This did not look right.

Farrina realized that something was wrong here.

She rose to her feet abruptly. Under the surprised gaze of Joe, Farrina passed the audience at the back and ran out of the room.

"Stop! You... hold on!" the men in black yelled, attempting to stop her, but it was too late.

Farrina ran across the yard and reached the street outside.

Neverwinter was in a state of chaos. Many people were running and shouting. Several residential areas had caught a fire. She heard more explosions in the industrial zone, and the whole city seemed to be out of control.

What scared her most was something above.

Darkness pressed in, and the sun had vanished into the thin air. A huge crimson moon appeared in the sky like a giant eye that snapped open.

# Chapter 1216: A Chain Reaction

---

Not only Neverwinter citizens saw the Bloody Moon.

Margaret was standing at the bow of the "Snow Wind" early this morning while gazing at the distant ocean. It had been 66 days since they had crossed the Sealine. Ocean waves rushed toward them, high at one time and low at another. Their movements were almost the same as the waves at the Shadow Waters thousands of miles away as if the two types of waves shared the same origin.

If the Swirling Sea did have a source, it must be the greatest discovery in the history of time.

Margaret was confident that the ocean waves would lead her to her final destination, and she also put great faith in the "Snow Wind".

The "Snow wind" did not require a sail to proceed against gusts of wind and rushes of rain. Since the ship was colossal, they could put plenty of food and water on it. Thanks to this robust and sturdy iron ship, not a single ship fell behind in this expedition.

She believed that Thunder would definitely make some spectacular discovery during this journey.

"Any luck?" a familiar voice said to her from behind.

Margaret turned around and said smilingly, "If I did find something, I would have informed the lookouts perched on the mast. So, you should have asked them first."

The person who was speaking to her was none other than the captain of the fleet, Thunder.

"I don't think so," he said brightly. "Perhaps they've found something already but are too shocked to say anything."

Magaret stifled her laughter. She knew Thunder was referring to what had happened when they had crossed the Sealine. When the

horizon became vertical, even the most experienced sailor had failed to react promptly. Everyone had fallen off the watchtower as the world had turned upside down, their legs too shaky to support them.

Seasoned sailors would normally cling to cables and masts in the event of a storm to prevent themselves from falling off the ship. However, the Sealine rendered all the common senses they had useless.

Thunder said while shrugging, "According to my intelligence, the Chambers of Commerce would later change their lookouts. They'll have the boldest person on their ship to serve as a lookout. Shame on them."

"Really?" Margaret said while shaking her head. "But I believe after the experience at the Sealine, nothing could really perturb them anymore."

"Who knows?" Thunder said while patting Margaret on the shoulder. His voice suddenly lowered. "Don't worry. Joan will be fine."

Margaret's smile faltered. She nodded resolutely and said, "Yes, she was born to live in the ocean. I'm sure we'll meet her again somewhere soon."

Being optimistic was an important ability for explorers. Margaret knew worrying would not help with anything. What she should do was to pull herself together and move on.

"By the way, the meeting is about to start," Thunder said after a moment of silence. "The other captains are already there. Come to the cabin with me."

"Okay, got it."

All the captains gathered to discuss the route, the status of their ships, and resources. They held this meeting every three or four days to make sure the whole fleet was on the right track.

Just at that time, Thunder and Margaret noticed that the seawater was suddenly awash with a sheet of a strange red color.

The sailors on the deck were all frozen to the spot, gaping at the far distance as if seeing something incredible.

A little farther on, several people fell off the mast and to the deck, as though they had seen the Sealine again. It really surprised Margaret.

Weren't they the boldest people on the ship?

Margaret turned around slowly, and the next moment, all her blood froze.

A gigantic, crimson round celestial object hung low over the horizon, far larger than the sun. It just came out of nowhere!

"In the name of Three God," Margaret mumbled. "Is this what His Majesty called the Bloody Moon?"

But Thunder did not speak. It was such a terrifying scene that even Thunder failed to formulate a proper answer.

A long whistle pierced the air.

It was the "Snow Wind".

The shriek of the ship shattered the dead silence and jerked everyone out of the trance.

The whistle indicated there were enemies!

Margaret and Thunder exchanged dark looks and ran toward the bridge.

"What happened?" Thunder yelled as he darted into the command room.

"There are... ships," his first mate stammered, "coming from the southeast... toward us..."

"What?" Thunder said. He quickly snatched the telescope from the first mate and looked in the direction the latter had pointed

out.

Margaret's heart sank to the bottom. They were now thousands of miles away from the Shadow Waters. They hardly saw any birds around this area, let alone ships.

This was a new sea never intruded by human beings!

She thus got a pair of telescope from another sailor and looked in the same direction.

"Jesus..."

Margaret gasped. Two shadows were floating on the surface of the water. They had no sail but were proceeding against the water. What was more horrific was that the seawater around them was boiling, as though numerous fishes were coming with them.

However, Margaret soon noticed that what seemed to be fishes were actually the last thing explorers wanted to see.

They were sea ghosts.

Their fins slid in and out of their views. Sometimes, they leaped out of the water, throwing a splatter of water that reflected off the sinister red sheen of the Bloody Moon, which reminded Margaret of a pack of sharks vying for food.

"On my order, all the ships turn about!" Thunder yelled. "Full sail! Advance in full sail! Everyone, ready for the war!"

"Yes, sir!"

"We've got trouble..." the captain of the "Tuna" swallowed hard.

"May the God of Ocean bless us," the other captains all prayed.

Fjords people knew that no ship could outstrip a sea ghost, which meant their enemies would soon catch up with them.

Their situation worsened every minute.

As the two shadows got closer, Margaret saw what they looked like. They were half in the shape of a ship and half a skeleton of a

monster, something that would have only appeared in one's nightmare. Their ribs exhaled clouds of dark green objects, and they were now only a dozen miles away from them!

When the dark green object fell into the water, the ocean stirred. Apparently, nobody wanted to be hit by such an ominous thing.

Thunder remained unflappable and issued another order. "Abandon all the food and supplies. Keep half of the drinking water only... No, just keep 30% of them and accelerate!"

Astonished, Margaret said, "Then we won't be able to explore."

"And it's probably not going to be enough for us to return to Neverwinter..." the first mate said hesitantly.

"We could fish and collect rain." Thunder took a sharp intake of breath and said, "However, if we could not outrun those sea ghosts and monsters, we'll all end up dying here. The exploration is over. Now, our goal is... to survive!"



# Chapter 1217: Doomsday (I)

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In the Snow Reflection Castle in the Kingdom of Everwinter.

"Your, your lordship... the Army of Graycastle retreated!" When a guard rushed into the castle hall and reported the news, all the nobles rested their eyes on him.

"Are you sure?" Earl Marwayne asked as he stood bolt upright.

"I'm positive. More than one scout has confirmed that," guard said while nodding vigorously. "Some people saw them empty their campsite overnight and also abandon a lot of food."

"They're... finally gone!" exclaimed the earl who burst into a roar of laughter. His heart instantly lightened. A month ago, Graycastle men had suddenly appeared in the Kingdom of Everwinter and soon taken over many port cities. They accepted neither their surrender nor presents but started to evacuate the cities immediately. Their barbarous behavior was even more outrageous than the church's. At least, the church would provide them with an opportunity to negotiate.

The reason provided by the Graycastle men was also quite ludicrous. They claimed that the Bloody Moon would bring swift destruction to the kingdom. Therefore, everyone must leave as soon as possible. This was the land passed down by generations, and the earl would not allow anyone to take it away from him. Neither the church nor Graycastle could do that!

"Your lordship," a withered, ancient scholar said oily, "the so-called full moon, sickle moon, dark moon and Bloody Moon are simply astronomical phenomena. They appear every now and then. If they believe that it omens ill, then let them do so. As long as your lordship holds onto this land, they can't do anything about it."

"That's right, the treacherous precipices around the Snow

Reflection Castle will protect you from any invasion."

"We won't yield even if the Graycastle men are willing to negotiate."

"The church threatened you first as well, but in the end, they had no choice but to promote you to bishop."

His other henchmen all rejoined.

Earl Marwayne became more and more confident. As he gazed at the sinister Bloody Moon that had emerged three days ago through the window, his fear gradually dissolved into gratitude. Had the Bloody Moon not appeared just in time, the Graycastle men would have continued to advance, and he would have definitely lost his precious Snow Reflection Castle.

Although the earl had heard that those barbarians rarely attack or interfere with a city ruled by a noble, taking away his people was intolerable.

If all the surrounding cities were evacuated, who could he rely on during the Months of Demons?

Like his henchmen had said, this city was his asset. It was to the north of the king's city, situated among precipices. The gaps between the city and the precipices were around a few miles to hundreds of meters wide, connected by suspension bridges. These gaps were actually wide enough to house a few castles.

His ancestors picked this isolated land to build their castle because this area was well fortified. In fact, the Snow Reflection Castle had never fallen. Even though the Church of Hermes had conquered the entire Kingdom of Everwinter in a very short period of time, they had never managed to drive their army into the Snow Reflection Castle. Instead, they had sent ambassadors to negotiate with the lord and promised him that he could continue to rule this land as long as he pledged fealty to the church. This was what a normal person would do.

That was why the earl maintained his silence for such a long time, hoping to sell the city at the best price.

However, he could not accept Wimbledon's conditions.

Earl Marwayne did not think that the demons referred to by the Graycastle men would invade his castle. The towering cliffs were natural defense. However, he needed surrounding towns and cities to provide him with resources. Without people, his current stockpile would be exhausted eventually.

Fortunately, these Graycastle men all fled when they saw the Bloody Moon.

"Mr. Zac, what should I do next?" Marwayne asked the old scholar.

"Haha, of course we should launch an attack at them," Zac replied while stroking his long beard.

The earl stiffened. Attacking was a completely different story. He would have never defied the King of Graycastle had he not had this geographical advantage.

"Rest assured. I'm not asking you to attack the Graycastle men directly. However, you could seize the territories they looted. Look, the scouts said the Graycastle soldiers are scattered around. Each unit only contains around 100 soldiers. How many resources and supplies could they take away with so few of them?"

Marwayne's eyes glistened with excitement. He said, "You mean..."

The scholar nodded smilingly and said, "Those people who left with the Graycastle soldiers must have left a lot of their possessions behind. If we trace them down, we could probably retrieve some resources."

For example, food that was not easy to carry along.

Marwayne thus summoned his Chief Knight in excitement.

While he was about to issue an order, a guard suddenly burst in and yelled, "Your, your lordship... there's a demon... outside the castle!"

"What demon?" the earl asked while scoffing at him. "You believe the nonsense those Graycastle men said?"

"P-pray forgive me, your lordship, but it..." the guard stammered in a hollow sort of voice. "But it isn't human indeed!"

Not human?

Everyone looked one another in bewilderment.

Marwayne's heart leaped to his throat. However, as the lord of the Snow Reflection Castle, he must maintain his composure.

The earl thus put up a straight face and said, "Well, take me there. Let's see what it actually is. I'm very curious about what the creatures living in hell look like."

...

With that being said, Marwayne still put on his best armor and took the largest God's Stone of Retaliation with him before he ascended the city wall. A dozen guards erected "a wall of shields" in front of him.

He felt hugely relieved when he saw the demon. The demon was, as his guard had suggested, alone.

It was standing on a protruding rock instead of the city wall. The rock was a little taller than the wall, right in front of which was the fathomless abyss. The patrolling knights had already ordered their squires to set up catapults and were ready to shoot their arrows.

After studying the demon for a while, Marwayne noticed that it was indeed not remotely human. The demon had hands and feet, but it had a much larger build than an ordinary man, its skin blue, with protruding veins running underneath. The biggest difference

lay in the tentacles that sprouted from its cheeks, chin and elbows. Marwayne was disgusted about those wriggling tentacles.

To his surprise, the demon's eyes were shut as if it was sleeping. Marwayne did not feel it threatening at all.

Marwayne wondered if the demon's visit was really the result of the Bloody Moon, but he soon convinced himself that this was a pretext the Graycastle men used to persuade ignorant villagers to leave the country. This monster definitely had nothing to do with the rumored doomsday. He just needed to ask his soldiers to shoot arrows, and then the demon would be dead.

At this thought, Marwayne took a deep breath and yelled, "Listen, you filthy, revolting monster! I'm the lord of the Snow Reflection Castle, Marwayne Caso. You illegally entered my territory. If you want to live, on your knees and surrender. This is your only choice. Otherwise, the icy abyss beneath will be the place you find your perpetual peace!"

Marwayne did not think the demon understood him. His hot statement was more like a demonstration of his own bravery than a warning to the demon.

If he scared away this demon that the Graycastle men were afraid of, then he would definitely rise to fame.

"My patience is limited. I'll count to five — five, four!"

In the meantime, Marwayne motioned his soldiers to get ready to shoot.

"Three..."

The demon's eyes snapped open. It bellowed, "Enough!"

Its voice pierced the air like thunders and rang off the precipices. Numerous icicles fell off as the cliffs shook. Marwayne felt the ground was about to shatter. There was a ringing silence, and he took a few steps backward in terror and fell to the ground.

## Chapter 1218: Doomsday (II)

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This monster... could speak human language!

The earl was reddened to temples when the guard helped him up. He had intended to exhibit his authority and valor in front of the demon to impress the other nobles. He had not expected, however, that the demon would uncover his carefully disguised gallantry with just one single word. What was more mortifying was that the demon was alone.

"Damn it. I must kill this monster!"

Marwayne raised his hand while gritting his teeth. He was about to order the soldiers to shoot when the old scholar suddenly stopped him and blinked. His lips took shape of a silent "stay put".

It took the earl a few seconds to realize that he should not lose his composure at the moment. Since the demon could talk, there was a possibility of negotiation and communication. Considering the situation was uncertain at this point, it was unwise to resort to force. The earl realized that the rumor circulated by the Graycastle men did cloud his judgement, for he had also, for a split second, viewed the demon as his enemy.

Perhaps, the demon came here alone as an ambassador.

Why did he take no action in the first place but stood upon the city wall while doing nothing?

If the demon was ferocious like what Graycastle men had said, it should have raided the surrounding villages unprotected by the city wall a long time ago.

The more Marwayne contemplated the matter, the more convinced he was. Had he killed the ambassador, he would have bred enmity with the demon, which was exactly what the Graycastle men wanted.

However, the earl found it hard to change his hostile attitude so

quickly and sit down to talk in an amicable manner, for just a moment ago, he had commanded the demon to kneel down.

Fortunately, the old scholar understood the earl's dilemma. He stepped forward and said, "Impertinent! If you can speak our language, why didn't you tell us the purpose of your trip? Our lord kindly gives you another chance to speak. What's your intention of coming here?"

Marwayne praised the old scholar internally. He had paid 10 gold royals for the service of this former butler at the king's city.

"Before I answer you, I have a question for you," the demon said placidly. "What's your relationship... with the human beings on the Fertile Plains."

The Fertile Plains? Where was it? They exchanged confused looks, utterly bemused.

But Marwayne was now very sure that this monster was an ambassador.

"I don't know where the Fertile Plains is," the old scholar replied again. "One place may have different names in different parts of the kingdom. We are of different races, and we may have very different ways to call a city. Bring a map, and I may tell you where it is."

"No, you humans came up with this name, and I'm just borrowing it." The demon then shook his head and said, "I see... I can't believe you're still like hundreds of years ago where each lord circled out their own territories without knowing anything about this world. I was expecting to see you yield to your fate in disbelief, terror and despair, but it seems that I was wrong."

What did it mean? What monstrous absurdity it was talking about. The earl frowned. For a moment, he seemed to capture a faint hint of disappointment in its horrific countenance.

"Are you referring to... the Graycastle men?" the Chief Knight

suddenly asked.

"Yes?" the demon said while looking toward him.

"They've been saying that demons will creep out of hell when the Bloody Moon appears. They're gone now," the knight said contemptuously. "If you go after them now, you may be able to catch a glimpse of them at the port in the east."

"Really?" the demon said as it gazed upon the east, and then turned around again. "I'll go, but not now. Since you know nothing about the Fertile Plains, then I'll cut the crap."

"I'm the Sky Lord, the commander of the Western Front Army. Thousands of years ago, your race and my race made an agreement to fight against the witches and their underlings. Your ancestors agreed to serve us. I granted them land, power and wealth. This contract has yet been terminated. It won't terminate until the war ends. You, as the descendants of your ancestors, should continue to serve us," the demon proclaimed in a booming voice. "Now, I command you to offer this city in accordance with the terms set out in this contract and serve me!"

Earl Marwayne gaped. This demon was crazy! Who cared about a contract signed 1,000 years ago? He would not even take a contract after a lapse of two years seriously. What kind of stupid commander of the Western Front Army was! What kind of commander would come in person alone? This monster was out of its mind!

"What if I disagree?" the earl said defiantly. His patience was exhausted.

"Death will let you yield," the demon who called himself the Sky Lord said. "Look, this is your fate."

The earl looked up and saw the distant mountains had been enveloped by a thin mist. It was not the mist he normally saw in the Impassable Mountain Range but a horrendous, crimson one.



The earl was not sure if it was because of the Bloody Moon or it was the color of the mist itself.

Another peculiar phenomenon he noticed was that the red mist did not float in the air but slowly flowed down the mountains, forming a hazy "waterfall".

Was the demon waiting for this moment?

Marwayne felt a jolt of uneasiness at the pit of his stomach. He cast a glance at his equally disturbed knights and squires and knew he must take action now.

"With you alone?" the earl said through clenched teeth and gestured his soldiers. "I've given you a chance. Kill it!"

The knights and guards finally pulled themselves together. They immediately released the arrows, which whistled in the air and streaked toward the demon.

However, not a single arrow hit it.

Everyone goggled incredulously. The demon dived into a black hole and vanished from their sight.

"Damn it. It has magic power," the Chief Knight said in a low voice. "Then how's it different from the witches?"

"No worries. We're all wearing a God's Stone of Retaliation. Magic power won't hurt us!" Marwayne yelled as he clutched the pendant in front of his chest. "Find and kill it!"

"The d-demon is there!" a guard shouted.

Within a second, the demon had flown over the abyss and landed silently on the street behind the city wall.

The earl was alarmed when he saw that the demon could instantly pass the precipices. Now, he was more certain that this dangerous monster, whether it was an ambassador or not, must be exterminated. After all, it was alone. "Shoot the God Stone arrows. Treat it as a witch! 100 Gold Royals for anyone who could kill it!"

As all the knights and guards charged at the demon, the demon slowly raised its arms.

The next moment, a "black screen" around hundreds of meters wide appeared abruptly behind the demon and blocked the street and houses like a wall.

What was it playing at? Was it planning to hide?

However, the earl soon found the answer.

Thick Red Mist suddenly flooded all over the black screen! Then a group of monster he had never beheld rushed out of the screen and clashed with the knights who dashed forward. The God's Stone did not help at all. The knights were thrown into the air by the howling monsters before they landed heavily a few meters away. The knights coughed out blood, their chests sinking. Apparently, there was no chance for them to survive.

Nevertheless, this was just the beginning of the nightmare.

More monsters came out of the black screen, bowed to the Sky Lord, and joined the battle. Every monster was far stronger and larger than an ordinary man. Soon, they gained the top of the city of wall and began to slaughter the soldiers. The soldiers were torn into pieces, their blood and broken limbs flying in all directions.

Within seven or eight minutes, the city had been filled with painful groans. Many people were heading to the city gate, in an attempt to escape but they were stopped by the icy abyss.

Marwayne felt his legs give away. He staggered and fell to the ground. This time, nobody came to help him up.

His guard had been ripped apart by the demons.

His precious Snow Reflection Castle, the land passed down by generations that he took pride in, fell.

The air was heavy with pungent Red Mist, and this city had completely become a living hell.

Through the Mist, the Bloody Moon appeared to be even more gruesome.

The earl now understood what a doomsday looked like.

The end of Volume II: The Battle of Doomsday

# Chapter 1219: The Investigation of the Abnormal Phenomenon

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In Neverwinter, Graycastle.

The Police Department was stirred. Everyone was busy issuing orders and making reports. The appearance of the Bloody Moon became the latest topic of discussion, and the whole organization went on a sort of "rampage".

The Police Department kept close watch on the new king's city of Graycastle where Roland lived. They make records of every single trivial matter that occurred in the king's city, and certainly a major event like a fire or an explosion would be big news.

Carter Lannis had not slept for two days. After calming down his frightened wife, he immediately devoted himself to work. As the Chief Knight, he was obligated to protect the king and eliminate anyone who attempted to stir up trouble. Usually, multiple incidents implied an active underground criminal group. Therefore, he sent for the Neverwinter Detective Group at once to assist with the investigation. Carter believed that he would soon get to the bottom of it and find out the culprit.

However, after he submitted a number of reports, the king founded a Joint Investigation Team comprised of the Witch Union, the Security Bureau of Kingdom, and the Administrative Office to investigate the new magic movie instead of the crimes in the city.

"Sir, we brought the witnesses," a knight whispered to Carter. "Would you like to start the interrogation now?"

Carter drained his teacup and said with a firm nod, "Yes, let's get started. Send everyone in."

"Yes, sir."

Since they were making an inquiry to witnesses rather than prisoners, the interrogation took place in an office so that the

witnesses would feel more comfortable to come forward with information. Apart from Carter himself who joined the Joint Investigation Team, Ms. Agatha and the assistant director of the Security Bureau, Vader, also took part in the investigation.

The first witness was a 21-year-old maid working in a hotel. She was not an official Neverwinter resident and had no criminal records.

She looked pretty nervous, for she kept rubbing her hands against the chair.

Carter cast a glance at the materials he had regarding this maid and asked sternly, "You're Miss Tinkle, right? I'm curious. The ticket price for the premiere of the movie 'The Dust of History' is 50 gold royals. How are you able to afford it?"

"Sir, I didn't steal or rob!" Tinkle explained hotly. "My customer, Mr. Victor, has a lot of money and he paid for me. There were many people in the hall that day, and I swear I'm not lying!"

Carter had conducted a background check before this interrogation. He reiterated the question simply to pressure the witness to tell the truth, as Miss Nightingale was not here to help him detect lies. Carter thus said, "Victor, right? I'll question him later. Now, let's talk about what you saw after the movie."

"Yes, sir..." the maid answered tremulously. "I didn't know what had happened at that time. Everything seemed so unreal."

15 minutes later, Tinkle finished her story. "Fortunately, the police repelled the soldiers. Otherwise, I couldn't imagine what would have happened to these two people."

Carter frowned. He had also watched the magic movie. "The Wolf Princess" was quite impressive but it was definitely not something so strange like that.

"Are you sure that the soldiers' weapons hurt the audience?"

"I... No, I'm not sure, but Mr. Victor did bleed, and I heard other

people scream. I don't think they were faking this up."

"Do you remember when this happened?"

"About 10 minutes before the ending? Possibly even earlier than that... Sorry, I was too scared at that time to watch the movie, so Mr. Victor held me in his arms."

"Do you have anything else to ask?" Carter asked the other two investigators.

Agatha said thoughtfully, "If I remember correctly, the characters in the magic movie talked to you, right?" She then held up a picture and asked, "Is he this person?"

It was an actor from the Star Flower Troupe, who played the guardian of the witch in the movie.

"Yes, it's him. I remember very clearly that he thanked us!"

Carter felt a chill run down his spine. He knew that once the filming was completed, nobody could modify the contents of the movie. It was impossible for the characters to communicate with the audience.

Seeing that neither Agatha nor Vader have other questions, Carter waved his hand and said, "Bring in the next witness."

The statements of the other witnesses were pretty much identical. In short, the magic movie had suddenly become alive. Although they later confirmed that the incident was just a part of the movie, it did occur in real life. As multiple people gave the same story, Carter judged that this was not a hallucination.

Carter had been focused on the fire and explosion before, so he had not paid much attention to the incident in the movie theater. Now, he somehow understood why the king wanted to investigate this matter.

"The next witness is a police officer who was guarding the yard when the incident happened. He's the captain of Team No. 2."

"Let him in."

The captain was apparently more composed than the other witnesses. He quickly related the story. "I first heard someone cry for help outside. When I was about to get into the theater, I saw a red moon in the sky. To be honest, I was a little hesitant at that moment, as I didn't know whether I should remain in my post or help those people. Just at that time, a witch ran out of the theater and asked me to bring my men and protect the audience."

"And then you shot the soldiers in the magic movie?"

"It sounds very strange but that's what I did. They're probably just actors, but at that time, they did pose a real threat to the audience. I didn't think I was hallucinating, so I immediately fired."

The second last witness was the witch who broadcasted the movie on that day, Nightfall.

"What could I do? I was desperate. Normally, whoever has excess magic power would activate the Sigil of Recording. How do I know that this would happen?" Nightfall ranted. "Everything went well at first. Then, suddenly, the Sigil pushed me out. I should have immediately cut off the magic power but it didn't stop. I wanted to wake up the audience, but they were in a trance. Anyway, I did all I could. At last, I had no choice but to seek the police for help."

Agatha twitched her lips and asked, "The Sigil... pushed you out?"

"Pretty much like that. I felt a great force repelling me. The more magic power I put in, the greater this repulsive force was. Then, everything went back to normal."

"Alright. Next."

Carter was momentarily stunned when the last witness came in. The witness was none other than the screenwriter of the movie, Kajen Fels.

His hand clenched in a fist as soon as he sat down.

"In the name of God, this is definitely the most brilliant play I've ever watched in my life!"

"You were in the theater at that time?" Carter said while knitting his brows. As Kajen had once argued with Carter's wife, Carter did not like this famous screenwriter very much. "I looked at the list of customers. You were not on there."

"He was at the backstage. There are special seats for staff members. In fact, the members of the Star Flower Troupe didn't need to buy tickets to watch the show. Didn't your wife tell you that?" Agatha supplied the answer. "Actually, Kajen reported the incident to me and that's why His Majesty asked the Witch Union to investigate the matter."

"I apologize, but this is a personal habit of mine," Kajen said while placing his hand on his chest. "I like to watch my own play secretly so that I would know how my audience like the show. Ms. May knows it so she didn't tell you." Kajen's voice was again alive with excitement. "I have to admit that this is a miracle in the history of magic movie, because the audience changed the ending!"

"What did you say?" Carter asked in surprise.

"You heard it right, Mr. Knight. This wasn't my story!" Kajen Fels said eloquently while flailing his arms. "The original story has a sad ending. The guardian acts as a decoy to protect the witch. He then falls off the cliff. However, the audience saved them both. Is there anything better than that?"

The Chief Knight goggled at Kajen.

"I didn't write those lines. The audience created this spectacular ending. Like the characters in the movie said, the audience saved them and altered their fate!" Kajen gradually raised his voice. "This is the ultimate play that I've been trying to create for my whole life. If you find out the reason why, please tell me, please!"



# Chapter 1220: The Origin of the Story

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Roland had the most hectic week since his ascendance to the throne.

There had been various subtle indications that the Bloody Moon would arrive a lot earlier than usual, and he had been preparing for that day for a long time. However, unlike what the church had predicted that it would appear in 10 years or as the Taquila witches had anticipated in two to three years, the Bloody Moon emerged above the Western Region right after the implementation of the immigration policy, so suddenly that its appearance had caught everyone offguard.

And that was not the end of it.

A week ago, various urgent reports had been sent from numerous cities to Roland informing him of the abnormal astronomical phenomenon. It seemed that nobody had seen the Bloody Moon approach the city. The Bloody Moon appeared to have always been there, being invisible to people until very recently.

Roland found that he had developed this "Bloody Moon Complex". Whatever he was doing, he always had a tendency to turn to the window and daze at the Bloody Moon outside. The moon was enveloped by a red haze but was not completely obscured. Roland sometimes had an illusion that the Bloody Moon was also gazing back at him.

According to the Union, the emergence of the Bloody Moon meant the beginning of the Battle of Divine Will, which Roland had been preparing for over the past few years. However, when it was actually time to fight, he felt everything become somewhat surreal. No news came from the Fertile Plains, and he had not heard anything from the scouts in the north either. Neverwinter appeared to be the only city affected by the incident. The Administrative Office sent in a report every half an hour, but none

of them was relevant to the demons.

"Your Majesty?" Nightingale's voice jerked Roland out of the trance. "You're staring at the sky again."

Roland blinked and was suddenly back to the present. "Ah... sorry. I couldn't help — "

Nightingale fed him a piece of dried fish and cut across him, "Don't apologize. There's nothing wrong with staring at the moon. You've been exhausted lately. I'm happy that you take a break every now and then. Do you want my company? Since the Bloody Moon has something to do with the Divine Will, let's study it together."

Amused, Roland took the dried fish and shook his head. Nightingale always had ways to justify her eccentric behavior. He replied, "I have a lot to do. Keep an eye on me. You mustn't let me slack off. Understood?"

Nightingale twitched her lips and went back to her couch.

Roland took a deep breath and returned to the stack of reports on his desk.

The Bloody Moon seemed to have caused more trouble than the demons. According to the statistics from the Administrative Office and the Security Bureau, there had been four fires and 16 crimes in Neverwinter in the past one week. Anna had also reported 21 deaths in the plants caused by malfunction of machinery. More than 500 people were injured, and 90% of injuries had occurred within 24 hours of the appearance of the Bloody Moon. This was the most chaotic moment in Neverwinter in the history of time.

At first, Roland had thought the Bloody Moon induced panic to the masses. However, after he analyzed the patterns of all these incidents, he found it was not that simple. Therefore, he asked the Joint Investigation Team to further investigate the matter, and the result was quite surprising. Those incidents were actually caused

by the fluctuation of magic power brought about by the Bloody Moon.

The reports submitted by Agatha detailed the chain of events.

The Bloody Moon had appeared at around 5:35 PM. All the devices driven by magic power in Neverwinter were, more or less, affected. For example, the ending of the magic movie "The Dust of History" had suddenly changed, and the audience had failed to distinguish illusions from reality. The electric circuits in the industrial zone were overloaded, and some machine tools powered by Dawn I stopped working. The most serious accident took place in Machinery Plant 1. One old boiler suddenly exploded, and hot steam burned the workers. Subsequent investigation showed that due to the outdated technologies, the boiler had been posing potential safety hazards for a long time, although Candle had, at one point, remoulded some of its important parts, including its valve.

Testimonies from multiple witnesses proved that order had been re-established in 10 minutes. The various accidents further created chaos and made many people believe that the demons were invading Neverwinter. Although the plant workers had all received emergency training, the evacuation did not go very well. The death toll would have probably continued to increase had Neverwinter not established an advanced public health system. Meanwhile, Nana's contribution to reducing the death was also phenomenal.

Roland had thought the Union had known that such things would happen upon the emergence of the Bloody Moon, but the truth was that none of the Taquila witches had heard about it. It appeared that the previous two appearances of the Bloody Moon did not bring such a huge impact on people's daily life, as magic power had not been widely used among the public back then.

Considering that people still suffered from the aftermath of the incidents, and nobody knew whether there would be a second

round of magic power fluctuation, workers in the plants conducted a thorough inspection and removed all the outdated machines. The Administrative Office also prepared a new contingency plan, which included how to stay calm upon emergencies. The term "magic-caused accident" was used in official documents for the first time.

As for the magic movie, it was broadcasted again in the theatre after a brief suspension that had lasted for three days. The public went crazy for the movie, and the theater was packed with people who had heard about what had happened during the premiere. Practically everyone came for the movie, in a hope of "changing the history". Even though the magic movie now followed its original storyline, the masses were still quite frenzied.

This was probably one of the very few pieces of good news in the past one week.

Nonetheless, the multiple accidents deterred Roland from using the Cube-powered steam engine right away. He wanted to first figure out whether the fluctuation of magic power occurred only upon the appearance of the Bloody Moon, or it actually caused continuous events during the whole period of the Battle of Divine Will.

If it only occurred when the Bloody Moon appeared, he was totally fine with that. Roland wanted to defeat the demons, and both Dawn I and the Magic Cube were the key to the victory. They also played an important role in the industrialization of Graycastle. Once the public benefited from these two types of machines, they would soon get addicted to them. However, if the fluctuation would continue to exist until the end of the war, Roland would have to take the potential risks into consideration.

Just then, the telephone rang. It was from the Administrative Office.

Normally, only the director, Barov, would use this line.

Roland heaved a sigh and picked up the phone. "What's the matter now?"

"No, Your Majesty..." Barov said hesitantly. "Astrologer of Dispersion Star just burst into my office and told me that he made a major discovery about the Bloody Moon. He hopes... No, you must come to the observatory and see it for yourself."

# Chapter 1221: The Nonexistent Bloody Moon

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As far as Roland knew, the Chief Astrologer was a man of honor and responsibility. Although he had not made any particularly extraordinary contributions to the astronomical research, he had founded the Arithmetic Academy and trained many students. He also assisted with the statistical analysis. In a sense, he extended the influence of the Astrology Association and expanded this old organization into one that could rival the Society of Alchemists.

Dispersion Star had come to apologize multiple times for his negligence and failure to predict the premature appearance of the Bloody Moon. However, as Roland had been too busy with various events lately, he had dismissed him. Nobody ever anticipated that the Bloody Moon would appear so early, and Roland had never intended to rely on the Astrology Association to predict the Bloody Moon. He used their service simply because these scholars knew arithmetics.

The word "must" alarmed Roland. Dispersion Star would have never used such an almost impertinent word had this not been an emergency. Therefore, Roland immediately headed to the Arithmetic Academy in the south of the city after he hung up.

The so-called observatory was only an attic of the Arithmetic Academy. The astrologers used this little attic as their temporary observatory before they moved to the top floor of the Miracle Building. Since the construction of the Miracle Building had taken longer than planned, Roland had made them a large telescope and transformed the attic into a revolving observatory so that they could continue with their astrological work.

Dispersion Star and the other astrologers had been waiting for Roland for a while. They soon went to their knee as they saw Roland come in. "Your Majesty," they chorused.

"Please rise," Roland said as he waved his hand casually. "Let's

jump into the business. What did you find?"

"Your Majesty, please follow me," Dispersion Star said solemnly as he led Roland to the attic at the top.

Roland immediately saw that the floor was littered with drafts and drawings. He believed they were the calculations of the orbits of various stars. In fact, Roland only knew very little about astronomy. After having obtained basic knowledge of physics and mathematics through two years of studying, these astrologers had now surpassed him.

Dispersion Star followed Roland into the attic, leaving the other astrologers outside. The moment the door was shut, Roland noticed that the old Chief Astrologer was wearing an extremely grave expression as if he were about to make his last will.

"Roland..." Nightingale muttered as she tugged his sleeve.

Roland nodded in comprehension. He knew Nightingale would protect him if he was in danger, but he was curious as to why the discovery alerted the astrologers so much.

"Your Majesty, we've been observing the movement of the Bloody Moon these days, as well as its change," Dispersion Star finally spoke after a moment of silence. "Since we failed to predict its appearance, we would like to make amends for our previous faults. We wanted to calculate its size and where its star district is. That's the duty of the Astrologers Association. However, the discovery horrified us."

Horried? Roland's brows contracted. This was not the word he expected to hear. "What do you mean? Get to the point."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Dispersion Star obeyed in a low voice. "The Star of Extinction is probably a hoax. The Bloody Moon... doesn't exist."

Roland was stunned. He turned around and looked through the window involuntarily. The crimson sphere was still aloft in the air,

as sinister as ever.

"Are you saying that the thing over there... doesn't exist?"

"I couldn't believe it either when I made the conclusion. On the contrary, I found it quite amusing. However, gradually, we started to take it seriously," Dispersion Star said after a sigh, and his voice became more confident. "Yes, Your Majesty, it doesn't exist. According to the materials passed down to us and your books, we're positive that the giant star over there doesn't affect other stars."

"When we drew the star chart and calculated the orbits of the other stars in the star district where the Bloody Moon is situated, we found not a single star deviate from its course, which means that the Bloody Moon doesn't affect those stars at all, nor does it affect us."

"In addition, there's no change in its own movement either. Before, the Bloody Moon was stationary in the sky, which indicates that it was moving at the same rate as us. But now, it's still stationary, despite that it's so close. That doesn't make sense."

Roland immediately understood what the old scholar meant. "If we remove it from the sky..."

"Then it'll explain everything," Dispersion Star replied while nodding. "Only when it isn't there will everything on the earth look normal. In other words, wherever the Bloody Moon is, it won't make a difference to our world."

Roland fell silent.

Now, he understood why the Chief Astrologer had been hesitant. The legend of the Bloody Moon and its relationship with the Battle of Divine Will were solely hearsay stories from the ancient Taquila witches without any solid proof. As the headmaster of the Arithmetic Academy, Dispersion Star had also heard about those witches. If it turned out that the witches were all lying, the



discovery would probably jeopardize the healthy relationship between the witches and the king.

But Roland completely trusted the witches. He enjoyed helping Celine conduct research and taking the God's Punishment Witches to the Dream World. Even if they lied, Roland would still like to be with them.

At least, the demons did exist.

"Are you positive?"

"Your Majesty, I wasn't until I received a letter from one of my friends in the old king's city this morning," Dispersion Star said as he produced a piece of paper from his pocket and spread it open. There was a drawing of the Bloody Moon. "As he observed the moon from a different location, the calculation might be a little different. My friend used to be a noble, but he's very interested in astronomy. Therefore, I asked him to calculate the star district from another location. His calculation is very different from ours. It isn't even a minor error. That means that the Bloody Moon is stationary everywhere. It's not only stationary in relation to this area but to the whole continent!"

Roland's heart skipped a beat.

"Your Majesty, it isn't possible that a physical object remains stationary in relation to everything!" Dispersion Star proclaimed slowly.

Roland suddenly remembered the red speck in the Dream World. It was always the same no matter how he viewed it.

In the Dream World, it had a different name.

Erosion.

# Chapter 1222: The Promise of the Divine Will

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"Your Majesty, Your Majesty... Your Majesty?" Dispersion Star's voice startled Roland.

"Er..." Roland rubbed his forehead and said, "Does anyone else know about it?"

"Only astrologers named after a star know it. The students in the Arithmetic Academy don't know," the old scholar said as he knelt down.

Roland now understood why the astrologers were all wearing a stern expression as though they were facing a death sentence. Apparently, they believed that Roland would kill them to prevent their betrayal of the horrific truth about the Bloody Moon, for the real purpose of founding this Astrology Association was to explore the Star of Extinction, which was a secret that only the royals were entitled to.

These astrologers were expert in political games, so they naturally knew the consequence of their discovery. Roland was impressed with their caution and loyalty. He shook his head and said, "You did a great job. Don't tell anyone about it. Keep up with the good work. Continue to manage the Arithmetic Academy and forget about astrology. Compared to something that doesn't exist, helping with Neverwinter is apparently more important."

With these words, Roland left the attic, leaving the stunned scholar behind.

"Let's head back to the castle," Roland said in a low voice.

He walked in a even more brisque manner than when he had come and almost broke into a trot.

"Do you think the astrologers are telling the truth?" Nightingale asked as she revealed herself.

"I don't know... I just have a hunch," Roland said. "It doesn't

mean that the Bloody Moon doesn't exist. Perhaps, it's something else..."

"Something... else?"

"For example, a pit."

Roland had never given much thought about the Bloody Moon. It was giant because it was close to the earth. For example, the Jupiter observed on io took up two thirds of the sky. People here called this object a moon simply because it was round with a soft glow.

If this was an Erosion, then it could be a square or a polygon.

Nightingale asked in confusion, "Are you saying that the sky is cracking?"

"It may be even worse than that, but I have to find it out first."

"How?"

Roland cast her a glance and answered, "By dreaming."

...

Although it was not yet his typical sleeping hour, nobody had forbidden Roland to enter the Dream World during the day. This time, he did not inform any of the God's Punishment Witches but only asked Nightingale to guard him.

"We'll meet upon the appearance of the Divine Will."

Roland had had no idea what the Divine Will was. Now, he suddenly came to the realization that the messenger was not referring to the time in the Dream World but that in the real world.

It was incredible that the messenger knew the true nature of the Dream World and even had knowledge of the real world. The messenger could probably even sense the change in both worlds. All Roland's suspicions seemed to have been confirmed when Dispersion Star had said "the Bloody Moon doesn't exist". Both the

"Battle of Divine Will" described by the executives in the Prism City and the anonymous book led Roland to the same conclusion.

"What are you going to eat for breakfast?" Zero asked him, with a toothbrush between her teeth as she stood in front of the sink.

"I'm not having breakfast today. You can eat alone!" Roland shouted without looking back. He pulled on his coat briskly and rushed out on his slippers.

The alley below the apartment was alive with people. The breakfast booths where deep-fried doughs and buns were sold were surrounded by students and young professionals. The residential area was teeming with the raucous voices of yelling vendors and the sizzling sounds of the deep-fried doughs.

The only place that seemed to immune to all these noises was the Rose Café.

The coffeeshop was like a loner slinking outside the mainstream community. When Roland took out the key and opened the door, he could see the vendor across the street cast him a pitiful and scornful look that people typically afforded to an idiot.

Roland took a deep breath and went straight to Room 302. The shop was on the ground floor, but Roland insisted the room number to be 302. It was a little strange, but he did not care about it.

Since Roland had been busy dealing with the incidents in Neverwinter, he had kind of forgotten about the Dream World for a while. Therefore, when he pushed open the door, he felt, surprisingly, a little nervous.

Roland did not care about whether the messenger would be able to get into the closed shop. As the messenger could send a message to him through the champagne glass, he certainly possessed some extraordinary power. Perhaps, the messenger would pop up somewhere out of nowhere abruptly.

Roland took a deep breath and put his hand on the doorknob.

The shop was empty.

Apart from a table and four chairs, there was no further furniture. Certainly, there was no hiding spot either.

A little disappointed, Roland slowly walked to the table and sat down.

Was he wrong?

Then he realized that the messenger was not an apparition after all, who could travel from one place to another in a split second. Perhaps, he should wait for while.

But Roland became more and more uncertain.

Could the messenger really find this place that had just opened a month ago? What if he was waiting at another place?

Could the note be a hoax that had nothing to do with the Divine Will in the real world?

Roland had not a shred of evidence to his theory.

Apparently, it would not be that easy to solve the problem.

When Roland was about to leave the shop, suddenly, the bell rang.

Clink and clang.

"Welcome to — " Roland's words rested on the tip of his tongue. The God's Punishment Witches did not come with him this time, and Garcia would not visit his store very often either. No customer should come here considering the absurd prices listed outside. When Roland opened the door, he saw a familiar figure outside the shop.

Roland had seen her twice.

He had met her during the orientation for new martialists in the Prism City.

He had also met her in the Reflection Church in the old Holy City of Hermes.

Roland remembered this face.

"I didn't expect that you would open a coffeeshop here and name it 'Rose Cafe'. I thought you didn't find that note."

Lan said.

# Chapter 1223: Lan

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Roland was a little surprised to see Lan, although he had somehow predicted that she would come. He asked, "Who are you exactly?"

"A person who needs help," Lan said while looking around. "I understand you have a lot of questions for me. We can sit down and have a chat. Let's sit over there by the window."

"Don't we need to go to Room 302?" Roland asked as he watched Lan take the seat.

"The reason I asked you to meet me here is to avoid curious ears. Since nobody's here, just take a seat you like," Lan said casually. "By the way, as this is a coffeeshop, can I have an ice coffee?"

"I thought you were disclosing a big secret to me, so I've been very cautious, making sure that nobody will overhear us."

"A secret will only become a secret when the eavesdropper recognizes its value. I monitor the Erosion underground every day and do need to take a break from time to time," Lan said gracefully. "One ice coffee, please."

Roland gazed at her for a second and then grumbled, "I only have instant coffee here."

"That's fine."

Roland was a little frustrated to see Lan act as if she were the owner of the shop. He added some milk to the coffee and put two ice cubes in it. His eyes were glued to Lan during the whole process.

"Rest assured. I won't disappear," Lan said while shrugging.

"I don't know about that," Roland said, his eyes fixed on Lan resolutely. "I once asked Garcia to contact you and went to the Prism City twice, but you vanished. Why didn't you talk to me?"

Why did you just leave me a note?"

Lan lapsed into a short silence before she answered on a sigh, "Because we weren't ready yet at that time, child."

Weren't ready? A little astonished, Roland pursued, "You mean you've been waiting for me to find out about the Bloody Moon, well, the Erosion myself?"

"You're quite smart. I now expect more from you."

"Expect what from me?" Roland grunted. "You don't look like a person who needs help."

"Then what should I do to convince you? Do I have to beg and cry for your help? Or you want a reward from me?" Lan said while shaking her head. "No, I don't think you'd trust me even I did so. That'll only push you away."

Roland wanted to joke around, saying "You never know", but somehow the words abandoned him. Lan was much older than Garcia. She was the Chief Disciple of the Defender of the Martialist Association, the senior of his senior. If she was really the person in the Reflection Church, she was probably 700 to 800 years old, a historical figure, so to speak. At this thought, Roland put up a more serious look.

"Alright..." Roland said as he sat down across the table, and went over the questions he had in his head. "Were you a member of the Union?"

"I have nothing to do with your world," Lan replied. "I was born here and will also die here, although it's won't happen until many many years later."

"But I saw your portrait in the Reflection Church — "

"That's nothing," Lan interrupted Roland. "It's just a historical record that doesn't really say anything."

"But what are the odds that you and the person in the picture



look exactly the same!" Roland argued while knitting his brows.

"If you think further, there are many coincidences in the history. Compared to dwelling on something in the past, you'd better focus on the present."

Roland knew Lan might be pretending. Without Nightingale, he could not tell whether she was telling the truth or not. There was no point in keeping arguing with her, so he immediately changed his question.

"So, what's magic power exactly?"

Lan's lips curled into a smile. She said, "You probably have already known it. Nothing in this world could explain it because it doesn't belong here. Low lives don't have the capability to understand higher animals. What we know now is that we can use it. Therefore, you could view it as 'a power we obtain by accident'."

From Lan's words, Roland judged that magic was like the Force of Nature, or perhaps simply another form of the Force of Nature. Because of magic power, the Dream World became the way it was. Roland thus asked, "So the book, 'Raison d'être', you mentioned in your speech during the orientation in the Prism City, and your deduction were all true?"

The most two pressing questions Roland had now were the nature and origin of the Erosion and the reason for the endless Battle of Divine Will.

"Not really, but you could think that way," Lan said quickly.

"I want to know the truth."

"It's beyond the scope of your understanding, and it's impossible to describe it in your language," Lan said after sipping the coffee. "Plus, everything I do is under God's watch. If I give away any information that'll potentially endanger Him, both of the two worlds will be destroyed. Hence, please remember that the truth is what you understand."

Roland twitched his lips in amusement. Lan could have directly told him that she would rather lie than tell the truth.

"He can destroy the two worlds?"

"That's why we call Him God. It's the closest word to describe Him in your language."

"What does He want?"

"To keep the Battle of Divine Will going."

"What's your relationship with God?"

Lan fell silent and then replied hesitantly, "I betrayed Him."

"Betrayed?"

"Yes. The war will continue, and I don't want to be stuck here forever. A new cycle means another round of loss. God will eventually exhaust His power. By that time, both worlds will be devastated."

Roland stared directly into Lan's eyes before he asked, "So, why did you come to seek me?"

"I need your help, child," Lan said and gazed at Roland. "I want you to stop the Battle of Divine Will and put this cycle to an end."

"You mean to win the war?"

"No, that'll start a new cycle," Lan said while shaking her head. "I want you to stop everything and replace God!"

Roland was astounded. He had never anticipated that.

He took a deep breath and said, "Sorry, I'm afraid I can't help you."

"Why?" Lan asked. Her expression finally changed.

"I don't know whether you're telling the truth. You admit that you could only give me some evasive answers to avoid raising God's suspicion. Sometimes, one single word could mislead a person. What if you lie to me? You betrayed God once, and you can

certainly betray me," Roland said while spreading out his hands. "I'm not good at taking risks. So, look for someone else to replace God."

"If you could help me — "

"Don't," Roland interrupted. "You said there was no reward. You told me a reward would make things worse."

Lan fixed her eyes onto Roland for about 10 minutes before she conceded, "No, I changed my mind."

"I'm determined," Roland said as he rose and poured himself a coffee. "An empty promise doesn't mean anything, although it sounds pretty nice."

"You should at least let me finish."

"I've told you — "

"I can bring Ashes back to life."

"Crash!"

Roland was aghasted. The glass in his hand slipped through his fingers, fell on the floor and broke into pieces.

# Chapter 1224: The Remedy

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"How do you know her?"

Lan said placidly, "Although I was born here, it doesn't mean I know nothing about your world. Have you heard of the 'Realm of Mind' or the Origin of Magic?"

Roland immediately thought of Kabradhabi's statement. His hand that was going to reach out to the broken cup on the floor paused in the air for a second. Then he suddenly threw himself over the table and asked Lan in a low voice, "Is she in the Realm of Mind?"

"Of course not, but she left a mark in the Realm of Mind. Anyone who has sufficient power will leave a mark in the Realm of Mind." Lan paused for a second before she resumed, "I know what you want to ask about. You want to know how to bring her back to life and then do it yourself. You also want to know how to stop the Battle of Divine Will. However, I have to tell you that we don't have much time."

"What do you mean?"

"People will eventually fade out of the Realm of Mind. This process is irreversable. Even if you know the method, you probably won't have enough time to suit the action to the plan, and this isn't the worst scenario yet."

"What's the worst scenario?"

"The Dream World has intruded God's mind, and He won't let things keep going like this. In other words, when God believes that nothing could put things back on track, He'll destroy the two worlds. The situation is even more pressing than you think, and that's why I made up my mind to persuade you," Lan said slowly. "Child, help me, and you'll be also helping yourself."

"Sounds quite convincing," Roland commented sarcastically. "But

you just said that the truth was what I understand. In other words, you can be lying to me right now, including the part about bringing Ashes back to life."

Lan heaved a deep sigh and leaned against the chair. "You can think that way as well, as I don't want to give you false hopes. I did so because I do want you to trust me."

Roland fell silent.

For Roland, it was a tough choice to make.

Lan's argument was quite solid. Roland had indeed heard a lot about the threat to the Dream World from the magic creature. He was certain that these magic creatures aimed to destroy this world. After hearing Lan's explanation, Roland believed that those creatures were actually God's "underlings".

However, he could not trust Lan completely without confirming the validity of the information himself. All the information that Lan had just related to him regarding the potential harm to God was just her version of the story. It might be totally wrong, and Roland could not jump to the conclusion based on false information.

However, he had not enough time to verify himself.

Under such circumstances, the only way was to take risks.

Roland closed his eyes and remembered that Tilly had cried her eyes out that night. He had noticed that the painful loss had dimmed the light in her eyes, as though a gemstone once dazzling was now incubated in a light sheet of dust. Some people maintained that such a change marked spiritual maturity. Only when one truly lost something would he began to cherish what he used to have. Roland dismissed such an absurd theory. A mature person would never allow himself to lose what he cherished and certainly would not let himself wallow in pain.

If he could bring Ashes back to life, he would do everything he

could to attain his end.

Roland suppressed his excitement and put up a perturbed look as he sat down again across the table.

"I can't trust you just yet. I need to hear how you're going to bring her back to life?"

"It doesn't conflict with what I want you to help me with. In fact, they're actually the same thing," Lan said slowly. "First of all, you have to get into the Realm of Mind in both worlds simultaneously. Otherwise, we won't be able to proceed."

Roland asked in surprise, "Two worlds? Hang on, are you saying that the so-called Origin of Magic does exist?"

"That's right. It's not something intangible but a physical entity. It's entirely different from the hollow created by the Erosion," Lan replied while nodding. "In fact, it's at the north end of the Land of Dawn, and we call it the Bottomless Land."

Roland's heart skipped a beat. He had heard this word somewhere else.

"But the demons have taken over the north. You know demons, right? They're my enemy in this Battle of Divine Will."

"I can't help you with anything regarding the other world. God forbids me to interfere with the Battle of Divine Will. You must find a way out yourself," Lan said flatly. "Beat them and get to the Bottomless Land. If you fail, then it'll be over."

That was why Lan said even if he knew the method, he wouldn't have much time to achieve his goal.

Roland pondered for a while and then said, "Alright. I'm going to wipe the demons off the face of the Land of Dawn anyway. Then how to get to the Realm of Mind in the Dream World? It's not a real world after all, so it won't be that hard, right?"

"Before I answer you, I want to ask you something," Lan said as

she looked through the window. "Do you really think that this world is a fake one?"

Roland stiffened for a second and also rested his eyes on the people outside. There were fewer people now on the street after the rush hour. Many vendors were taking a rest, and some were ready to head back home in contentment. Others were reading newspaper while smoking cigarettes.

Now, the students and young professionals were all gone. The elders started to come out and head to grocery stores. When they passed the Rose Café, they cast contemptuous glances at the shop and exchanged murmurs with a derisive air.

Roland knew that if he went out there and argued with them, these elder people might retort fiercely. The verbal altercation might also attract many curious, gloating onlookers. Roland certainly did not want to become the center of an improvised show.

He found it hard to admit that this world was real.

"How to define reality?" Lan murmured absent-mindedly. "Must a living being have a physical body? If this entity has consciousness and emotions, isn't it enough to be alive, even though it's in the form of energy?"

"Well, I think it is."

Lan turned around and said, "Then protect this world. Once it's destroyed, everything here will disappear. It'll be a greater loss than anything in the other world. If you lose this Dream World, then you'll be shut out from the Realm of Mind forever."

"Is the entrance to the Realm of Mind in this city?"

"Actually, you're in the Realm of Mind right now," Lan corrected him. "This is the Realm of Mind."

Roland's eyes were wide open.

In other words, his body was still in Neverwinter, whereas his mind was at the Bottomless Land in the north of the continent thousands of miles away?



## Chapter 1225: The Remedy (II)

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"Is this also the result of magic power?"

"Yes. There are so many types of magic power that I just can't explain every single one of them. It's a power that transcends the four fundamental forces, the ultimate solution to the great unification, if that makes sense to you," Lan explained mildly. "Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that you can enter God's territory and interfere with the Battle of Divine Will. This world is an independent one. It's protected by a thick membrane. That's why I can sit here and talk to you."

For some reason, Lan's explanation reminded Roland of bubble blowing. Among those floating bubbles, one of them housed the Dream World. He then asked, "Then how do I penetrate it?"

"The same way the magic power enters our world — through the Erosion."

"Er... could you tell me more about it?"

"You should have already noticed that this world has changed a lot," Lan resumed, and Roland could feel his heart beat frantically in his chest. "At first, it was just a reflection of your mind, but there are now many things you've never seen before. The change started when you began to collect the Forces of Nature."

"You even know that?" Roland exclaimed in surprise.

"I've been wandering about in the Realm of Mind since I was born, so I can sense even the most subtle change." Lan continued, "Listen, child. Both the Dream World and God's territory are driven by magic power. We call it the Force of Nature. When you continue to collect them, this world will expand and overlap with God's territory. That's the reason why Erosions appear."

Roland had heard about this theory during the orientation. He thus said, "As far as I know, the Martialist Association has collected

many cores of the fallen Force of Nature. If you want to collect as many of them as you can, why not just support the the Fallens?"

To Roland's surprise, Lan did not object his proposal but simply summoned a bitter smile. "Unfortunately, I'm just the Defender's student. I can't take you to the central hub in the Prism City."

"You don't mind turning against the Association?"

"If it could stop the Battle of Divine Will, I won't. Once the Battle of Divine Will ends, there'll be no Erosion in the Dream World, so in a way, I'm still helping the Association. But that child... She'll be very disappointed, for she has put so much faith in you."

Lan suddenly put up a very regretted look as she said these words.

Was she referring to Garcia?

Roland was a little surprised that Lan had such a deep affection toward Garcia. As a God's servant, she should have lived hundreds of years, and nothing should have been able to perturb her mind.

Was she acting or was she actually too involved in her role?

"Well, this isn't the only way." Roland wanted to get some coffee to ease up the tension in the air when he suddenly realized that the cup was already broken. He thus withdrew his hand and said, "You also said that I have to enter the Realm of Mind in the two worlds simultaneously, right? Perhaps, by that time, we would have had enough cores. The only problem is that how I am supposed to know that the Dream World has already overlapped with God's territory? We can't really enter God's territory from the Erosion in the Prism City, can we?"

"Of course not. The hollow created by the Erosion there is the area of nothingness in the Realm of Mind. It's completely a different thing," Lan said while nodding. "As for when the Erosion will affect God's territory, you'll know when that day comes. However, this will also mark the beginning of the destruction of

the two worlds. Therefore, you must find a way to the Bottomless Land before that."

"And then?"

Lan shook her head.

It appeared that Lan could not disclose any more than that, otherwise she would bring harm to God. Nevertheless, there was also a possibility that Lan chose to hold the information back intentionally. Roland had now a basic understanding of what he should do. In fact, he had planned to drive the demons out of the Land of Dawn and earn some extra income by killing the Fallen Evils a long time ago, so Lan's information did not really change much of what he was doing. The only change was that he now probably had to fight both the demons and the Fallen Evils at the same time.

Roland was not certain what he would encounter at the Bottomless Land. Lan did not say anything about that. If this was a trap, the only part where Lan might lie to him was when she asked him to replace God.

Roland did not think God would surrender after he penetrated the Realm of Mind. Since everything sounded so vague to him, he had to proceed with extra caution.

Another question that bothered Roland was that why she chose him.

As far as Roland could see, Lan could totally pick someone else to help her. Although Lan looked like human, Roland was certain she was not any ordinary woman. Human beings had been defeated once. Given that, she could completely pick a demon or someone in the Sky-sea Realm to achieve her goal.

According to Lan, the north of the Land of Dawn where the Bottomless Land was situated had been taken over by the demons. Kabradhabi had also confirmed that the enemy in the Sky-sea

Realm was quite overpowering. The demons apparently had a hard time keeping their land. These two races were obviously far more powerful than the mankind. In a sense, they were almost halfway through the mission.

Roland was not yet that arrogant as to believe that he was the only person who could leave a mark in the Realm of Mind.

At least, Zero had that power too. Dimly, Roland had a feeling that the Battlefield of Soul was a demonstration of the power struggle in the Realm of Mind.

The Dream World originated from there.

He thus asked, "I bet... that I'm not the first person you sought help."

Lan replied immediately, "Yes, I turned to someone else for help as well over the past thousand years."

Roland felt his chest constrict. He pursued, "Also including demons?"

"I don't know much about the other world. After I left the Divine Land, I lost my power of connecting with other servants, but I can tell you that I'm not the only traitor."

"Who's the last person you talked to regarding this matter? Zero?"

"The Dream Courier, Alfina. She lived 869 years ago."

The name was unfamiliar to him. Roland asked, "None of my precursors succeeded?"

Lan sighed, "You probably think it's pretty easy for us to talk face to face like this, but the fact was that they didn't even manage the first step, which was to stabilize themselves in the Realm of Mind and establish effective communication. Also, I had to phrase the matter in a way that made sense to them. In other words, they had to understand what I was saying. Only in that way would the

message be successfully delivered. The more they understood, the better reply they could formulate. This rule applied to both you and the demons."

"Like you have to share the same mindset?"

"Exactly. In fact, you're the first person with whom I can effectively communicate. Although I don't know where you obtained so much knowledge, far more than what this era actually needs, I'm glad I found you."

"Well..." Roland said hesitantly. "What if I fail?"

Lan said after a moment of silence, "I'll continue to wait until the next person appears. I'll wait until someone frees me, or until... God kills me."

# Chapter 1226: The Prison of the Heart

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"What will the world look like when God is gone," Roland asked tentatively. "What will you gain from this? Are you able to leave the Realm of Mind and become a physical entity?"

"To be honest, I don't know," Lan said with a smile. "But anyhow, it's better than being imprisoned here forever. At least, there are hopes."

Roland gazed at her for a while. There was not the faintest hint of uneasiness on Lan's countenance. She acted as if just making a very simple decision.

It appeared that he could not get anything more out of her, unless he brought Nightingale into the Dream World. Their subsequent conversation did not go anywhere either. Every time Roland asked about God, Lan kept her mouth clamp shut and reiterated that she could not help him with the Battle of Divine Will.

Lan told Roland that she could do nothing more than living here as a martialist and delivering him messages. According to Lan, there were various rules that governed the Realm of Mind. Even God might not be able to change those rules at His will. Because of such restrictions, Lan had finally found a chance to look for the person who could terminate the Battle of Divine Will.

Nevertheless, she would not be able to gain total freedom until the war was stopped. All the rules and restrictions still applied to her, and her work could be sabotaged anytime.

When Roland walked Lan out, he asked one last question.

"By the way, you said you didn't expect me to open a coffeeshop here. Is there another Rose Café somewhere in this city?"

"Yes," Lan said while smiling faintly. "It's in the Prism City."

"But I've asked Garcia..."

"The coffeeshop is in the central part of the city. It's only accessible to the executives of the Martialist Association. At that time, I already knew that the Association would license you, so you would be able to get there via your hunting license. However, you don't have the slightest interest in the Association, which really surprised me. You've never been to the Prism City since you got your license." Lan paused for a second before she resumed, "Also, for your information, the central hub where we store the cores of the Fallen Evils is located at the bottom level of the city. Normally, only the Defenders and their seniors have access to it."

Now, Roland finally understood why he could not find the Rose Café. It was actually a coffeeshop exclusive to the executives of the Association.

"So where shall we meet again next time? I mean if we plan to meet again, which coffeeshop? Now there are two Rose Cafés."

"This one would be better," Lan said as she looked up at the towering apartment building. "Garcia should be living here, right? It's not a bad idea to visit her every now and then. I would probably... like it here a lot."

"Probably? She doesn't know her likings?" Roland thought to himself, his brows raised, but he remained silent.

Then they parted, and Roland saw Lan gradually disappear from his sight.

Roland leaned against the shop door while revisiting their conversation.

Both the Dream World and the real world seemed to be more understandable now. Words like magic power, Divine Will, the Realm of Mind, the Land of Dawn, and the Fathomless Abyss all became more concrete and made more sense to him.

While Roland was lost in thought, suddenly, he felt a queer quaver steal through him!

Roland looked up abruptly and saw a distorted, transparent wave sweep over the entire alley and soon ripple across the whole area.

What had happened?

He was surprised that the residents in this community seemed to be unconscious of the change, for they were still talking and laughing as if nothing had happened.

Roland almost thought that he was hallucinating.

But he knew, based on his past experience, that this was a change only visible to him. It was a fluctuation of power that he sensed when he collected the cores of the magic creatures. Roland clenched his fists. It was quite a pleasant sensation, but he somehow felt a little unsettled this time.

Did something impact the Dream World?

Lan was gone, and he had not obtained a phone exclusive to Association members from the Prism City. Otherwise, he could have asked her about it.

Roland thus closed the coffeeshop and returned to the apartment.

He had planned to disconnect the dream and go back to reality. However, when he entered Room 0825, he saw Zero's sneakers at the doorstep.

Roland wondered why Zero had not gone to school yet. He had been with Lan in the coffeeshop for over an hour.

To his dismay, he found the little girl lie on the floor. There were two broken glasses not far away.

"You gotta be kidding me..."

Roland strode over to the little girl and clasped her wrist.

He felt the pulse.

Then he noticed that Zero looked feverish, her eyes shut and her



brows contracted, as though she was suffering a great pain.

Roland's hand reached onto Zero's forehead. It was burning.

Did she have a fever?

From where she fell, Roland judged that Zero probably had lost her balance when she was trying to clean the coffee table.

"Damn it. She was alright this morning."

But Roland was relieved that there was no Fallen Evils involved. The moment he had seen Zero fall on the floor, he had thought that God had come to seek revenge.

Roland thus held Zero in his arms, sped down a flight of stairs, and climbed into the mini van.

At this moment, Zero gained her consciousness. She opened her eyes and muttered, "I... broke the glasses... on the table."

"I saw it."

"S-sorry, I'll... pay you. I don't... want to go back to the countryside."

"Is she so sick that she's out of her mind?"

Roland put Zero in the passenger seat and fastened the seatbelt. "Stop talking," he said.

Then Zero suddenly stretched out her hand and spoke again when Roland was about to turn on the engine, "Don't go..."

Roland had never seen Zero, who always spoke to him in a defiant and almost trenchant manner, look so fragile and helpless. He somehow thought of what she had written in her diary. Perhaps, the fever brought about the most tender part of her personality. Roland did not know how her families used to treat her. At these thoughts, Roland heaved a sigh and said, "Don't worry, you still owe me rents. I won't let you go."

After receiving the confirmation, Zero closed her eyes, but she

did not relinquish her grip.

It was already afternoon when Zero was hospitalized. Although the cause of the fever remained unknown, Zero looked a little better.

The doctor did not come until late evening.

"Are you really a martialist?"

"Yes, what's the matter?" Roland asked.

"This isn't funny," the doctor grunted. "The girl isn't sick at all. She's simply awakened. Some people will indeed feel not very well when they're awakened, although it's not very common. Didn't the Martialist Association tell you about that?"

"What?"

"Awakened! What a mess. If there weren't a martialist in the hospital, I would have thought it's some rare disease," the doctor said dismissively. "You can go now. Take her home."

...

So Roland brought Zero back to the apartment building.

He let out a deep sigh as he stared at the white-haired girl curling up in his arms. As a former Pure Witch, it appeared that she was destined to have magic power. Fortunately, Zero was now living in the Dream World, so she would probably not make the same mistake as she had done in her previous life.

Darkness had now pressed in. The long corridor outside was bathing in a soft, warm glow. A few bugs flew toward the light source. When Roland approached Room 0825, he found, surprisingly, a familiar figure. It was Garcia. She was sitting at the doorstep while leaning against the door.

"What's going on today?" Roland wondered. "Everyone seems to come look for me." He had told Nightingale that he would only have a short nap. Now it was probably time for dinner in the other

world.

"Hey," Roland greeted Garcia as he crouched down. "What brought you here? Did you lose your key and want to stay over?"

However, Garcia neither responded nor sneered as she usually did, and Roland realized that something was wrong.

All the words rested on the tip of his tongue when he saw Garcia's face.

It was glazed with tears.

"A large number of Fallen Evils attacked the Prism City. Someone who escaped told me that my master... my master stayed behind to protect others and was killed by the Fallen Evils..."

# Chapter 1227: The Fall of Prism City

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Roland was stunned.

If he remembered correctly, Garcia's master was called Lan.

Which meant that the lady who had met him in the Rose Café this morning was... dead?

How could it be possible?

Even though Lan was bound by the rules in the Dream World, she was, after all, the Defender's student and should have the capability to deal with Fallen Evils.

The Prism City used to be a mine, so the main part of it was built underground. It was constantly guarded by the Awakened. How could the Fallen Evils breach the city so easily?

There were so many things that Roland failed to understand, but he managed to calm Garcia down. "Get in first."

Garcia rose feebly as if all her strength was gone.

Roland put Zero in her bedroom and gave Garcia a glass of water. The latter gradually regained her composure, although her eyes were still kind of out of focus, but she, at least, stopped crying.

Roland then noticed that there were six unread messages and a dozen phone calls. He scrolled down and realized that they were mostly from Garcia.

"Oh, sorry... Zero suddenly got a fever, so I had to go to hospital and left my phone here," Roland said in embarrassment. "What happened in the Prism City? How did you know that your master was killed."

It took a long time for Garcia to find her voice. After what seemed to be an eternal silence, Garcia finally broke out inarticulately, "I received an urgent message from Co2 around noon, saying that something happened to the headquarters. He

requested support from martialists from all over the world."

Roland remembered that Co2 was the liaison officer for that joint mission he had attended a while ago. Now, he understood why Garcia had called him so many times, so he asked, "But nobody went there?"

Garcia should have immediately gone to the Prism City.

"Nobody was able to, because the Erosion in the middle part of the building suddenly expanded," she muttered. "Nobody knew how it happened, and the video camera didn't catch it either. Co2 told me that by the time the Association realized it, the Erosion had already slashed the Prism City in half, and all the connection between the upper and lower floors were disrupted."

"The Erosion expanded?" Roland's heart pounded against his ribs like a frantic bird. If the Bloody Moon was actually the hollow created by the Erosion, it should have been able to appear anywhere, including the underground area. If the emergence of the Bloody Moon marked the beginning of the Battle of Divine Will, then could the expansion of the Erosion be another form of Bloody Moon?

"When did it occur? Do you know?"

Garcia nodded slightly and said, "Around 9:00 in the morning."

That was almost the same time he had seen that wave!

Was it a warning from the Dream World that the Erosion had begun?

"Then what about the Fallen Evils?"

"They... they came out from underground..."

Half an hour later, Roland finally had a full picture of the incident.

Noticing that the Erosion had reached the middle part of the building, the Martialist Association immediately decided to send

reinforcements. The Prism City wedged into the ground like a giant awl. Although it was well fortified, there were also several drawbacks in its architectural structure. For example, they must constantly maintain the ventilation system to make sure that people on the lower floors could breathe easily. Apart from that, all the life essentials, such as water and food, had to be transported from the upper level to the bottom. Therefore, when the supplies were cut off by the Erosion, the staff at the bottom level might be in peril.

The most pressing task for the Association now was to find out how large the Erosion was and then reconnect the upper and lower level. The architects who had built the Prism City had indeed also thought about the possible disconnection and thus equipped the building with a few evacuation exits so that people could quickly escape the building in an orderly manner upon an emergency.

Since the Martialist Association figured out that the disruption was caused by the Erosion rather than an enemy attack, they soon withdrew the reinforcement request. At that time, the Defender and his students were all there in the building, and what the Association actually needed was the engineering team and paramedics, so the martialists did not come to rescue at once but waited for further instructions.

However, something out of expectation had happened.

While everyone was going down through the evacuation exits, Lan and her team at Exit No. 04 were suddenly attacked by the Fallen Evils.

Later, somebody noticed that many Fallen Evils used to be their colleagues on the lower level.

It was quite shocking and incredible news. Nobody knew what had happened at the lower part of the building a few hours after the disruption. What they saw was a group of monsters with fallen cores transformed from ordinary staff members and martialists.

Most people at the lower part of the Prism City were elites of the Association. What had made them betray the Association within half a day remained as a mystery. However, the moment they had chosen to merge with the fallen cores, they were no longer human. Even Roland was astonished at the turn of the event, let alone the rescue team at the scene.

That was why Lan's team had been caught offguard.

It was a miracle that a few people managed to escape when the whole team was outnumbered and overpowered. However, the team leader Lan did not make it. Some Fallen Evils attacked her when she was trying to close a door.

At these words, Garcia started to sob again.

Roland handed her another glass of milk. After a moment of hesitation, he asked what concerned him most. He knew it was not a good time to ask a question like this, but he must know the answer.

Roland took a deep breath and said, "These are all what the survivors reported to the headquarters, right? Did anyone actually see it when your master was killed?"

Garcia would have retorted ferociously had she not been so perturbed and devastated. She croaked, "My master... my master blocked the switch that controls the door... Then she was torn to pieces by the Fallen Evils... Many people in her team saw it..." Her voice again perished into a suppressed sob.

"... I'm sorry," Roland sighed.

He did not know what would happen to a dead person in the Dream World. Would she return to the Realm of Mind or completely disappear? If God did control almost everything in the Realm of Mind, neither would be a happy ending. Without the protection of the Dream World, Lan, as a traitor, would definitely be punished severely.

Roland had a very good reason to suspect God, for this attack seemed to be targetting Lan.

And Lan was not the only person God intended to eliminate.

He wanted to tear down the whole Dream World.

"If you lose this Dream World, then you'll be shut out from the Realm of Mind forever," Lan's voice reverberated across his head.

It appeared that there was going to be a Battle of Divine Will in the Dream World as well.

His enemy, however, was neither the demons nor those in the Sky-sea Realm.

He would be confronting God directly.

...

"Hold on..."

She heard loud noises. Sometimes the noises were so far away, but sometimes they were suddenly so close.

What had happened?

She felt excruciating pain. It seemed that her leg was broken. She had never suffered so severe injuries before, not even at the upgrade ceremony.

For a split second, she thought of death.

"Ah, right, I'm dying," she thought. She felt that her body gradually turn cold, her mind drifting off. She felt hard to concentrate.

"Hold on..."

The voice drew nearer.

Was there somebody out there?

Strange... she had heard this voice somewhere before.

"Someone's still alive here. Can anybody help me remove this



stupid stone?"

"She's hurt badly. Quick, move!"

"One, two, three!"

Suddenly, the weight on her was lifted, and she was transferred to a soft bed.

"Hold on. You'll be OK," someone talked to her from above. "The Association has sent for the best doctor and medical equipment. You'll be fine once you get to the hospital!"

"The Erosion expanded?"

"By the way, you came from Cargarde Peninsula, right? What's your name?"

"My... my name?"

"Yes, do you still remember it?"

She used all her strength to reply.

"... Valkries."

# Chapter 1228: God's Enmity

---

At the entrance to the Prism City.

The whole square was lit up, and the roar of machines rented the air. The rescue had lasted for nearly 16 hours, and the Defender, Rock, was waiting in the temporary tent for the latest news with a steely look on his face.

It was rumored that nothing could unsettle him. However, this was a mistake. Lan's death actually shocked him a great deal, and he blamed himself for not fighting the Fallen Evils. Yet he knew it was not advisable to lament the loss now. The first thing he needed to do at present was to find out what was going on at the bottom level of the building.

After Exit No. 4 was under attack, Exits 01 and 05 were also surrounded by the Fallen Evils. Fortunately, the rescue team there learned Lan's lesson and eradicated the enemies at a minimal cost, but the casualty rate was still astonishing. Like what had happened at Exit 04, all the Fallen Evils were transformed from the staff members at the bottom level. The death toll had reached 320, which was almost the total number of the staff members on duty.

Clearly, it would not be long before the Fallen Evils took over the entire bottom floor.

Rock did not know why those people would merge with the fallen cores within just a few hours of the breach. The Prism City was equipped with the most advanced emergency system. Even if the bottom floor was completely cut off, they could still sustain themselves for a while. They should have known that the Association would never abandon its members. As long as the exits were not blocked, they would soon be able to escape.

However, Rock currently had no time to give it much thought. He was only concerned about the status of the central hub. There were more than 3,000 fallen cores stored in the central hub. If

those cores were released to the public, the consequence would be disastrous. There would be far more than 300 Fallen Evils as they were facing now.

"Mr. Rock." Just at that moment, a man in a suit came into the temporary headquarters and whispered to him.

"Are we really so unlucky?" Rock's face clouded over. The rescue team had just told him that the Erosion had suddenly expanded. There were two groups of touring martialists from Cargarde Peninsula currently in the Prism City. Since the Erosion had destroyed the middle part of the building, the floor closest to the Erosion slid into a hollow, and the two touring groups thus fell.

Based on the current situation, these tourists might not be able to survive.

"What should we do?" the man in the suit consulted. "Some celebrated martialists from Cargarde are among them. If we fail to handle this crisis properly, we may be caught in some diplomatic problem."

"Try to find them and save as many as we can. How do I know what we should do? It's something beyond our control."

"But the Defender from the peninsula may not listen to you..."

Rock lapsed into a short silence and said, "I see. Just hush this thing down. I'll ask the director of the Sky City to assist us."

As soon as the suit man left, a liaison officer came up to Rock.

"We've heard something from Exit 01! They've opened up a passage and are now going down!"

"Connect them to the main screen," Rock said in a low voice.

"Got it!"

After a brief noise screen, Rock saw what was going on at the front. From the shooting angle, he judged that the video footage was transmitted from the head-mounted camera that the team

leader was wearing. The lighting down there appeared to be quite good, although a few lights were flickering. The emergency electric motor seemed to be working, so the elevator was still functioning. This could indeed save the rescue team a lot of time.

However, nobody cheered up at the scene. Everyone rested their eyes on a peculiar "red spot". The red spot was in an irregular shape, but it was perfectly embedded in the concrete like a piece of asymmetric artwork.

Rock knew this was definitely not a coincidence. Everything contaminated by the Erosion would disappear, including the Force of Nature.

It was this red spot that separated the Prism City into two parts.

"Forget about the headquarters," Rock instructed. "Go down to the bottom level and make sure that the central hub is intact."

The rescue team, after receiving the order, immediately went down. Fortunately, they did not encounter any Fallen Evils on their way. Rock did not see a lot of traces of fight either. The building was dead quiet. Everything was in a perfect order, as though the building was simply abandoned.

When the rescue team reached the central hub, everyone in the temporary headquarters gasped.

Rock clenched his teeth.

Another Defender named Furious Flames was slashed in half, its upper body clinging to the steel gate around 10 centimeters thick, all his clothes reduced to ashes. In the center of the steel gate was a huge, irregularly shaped hole, which seemed to be drilled out under high heat.

Apparently, Furious Flames had attempted to stop the invaders from entering the central hub but had failed.

This was definitely not the work of Fallen Evils.

It took the rescue team a while to open the gate. All the cores were gone.

There was a dread silence in the headquarters. Everyone dazed at the screen, horror-struck.

Rock clenched his fist even tighter. He knew that the staff at the bottom would not take the fallen cores for no reason. He ordered solemnly, "Get the surveillance footage. I want to see what kind of monster it was!"

His sonorous voice jerked the audience out of the trance. Since they had immediately switched over to the contingency power, the surveillance system still worked well. Despite a few broken cameras, most of the video footages was still there. The technical support soon inserted the spare hardware, and the video was transmitted to the big screen. All the executives in the headquarters was taken aback by what they saw.

The moment the Erosion had expanded, several blood clots had escaped from the red hollow and hit the floor. These clumps of blood wriggled and gradually transformed into human-shaped monsters. One of them had the ability to melt everything down. It instantly penetrated the floor and reached the bottom level. Another monster was even more terrifying. It immediately impaled a few martialists and turned them into puppets, making them look like inferior Fallen Evils controlled by the Force of Nature.

Within half an hour, the bottom level was breached. People who were alive all merged with the fallen cores in a daze and became their enemies' puppets. After that, the monsters "devoured" the rest of the fallen cores and created a passage in the central hub before they vanished from the camera.

It was Rock's first time witnessing such an incredible power. The fact that the Erosion generated new Fallen Evils horrified him.

He somehow thought of the joint mission last time, where the

survivors had told him about the monster coming from the "man-made Erosion".

It appeared that the Erosion, which they used to believe could engulf everything, had changed.

Also, he sensed the blatant animosity from the Erosion from the way those monsters attacked the central hub and the people.

But Rock believed that as long as all the martialists worked together, they would eventually find a solution to eliminate these enemies, no matter how powerful they appeared to be. The most important task now was to raise the morale and not let the fear conquer them.

"Everyone, just as you've seen, this isn't an accident. The Erosion is invading this city!" Rock announced as he straightened up. "It sounds quite strange but that's the truth. Let me make it clear. This is a war! They aim to take this world! I'll contact all the other Martialist Associations immediately, and we should unite together and exterminate the enemies!"

At these words, Rock paused for a second and then said, "Like my student Lan said, the Battle of Divine Will has begun."

# Chapter 1229: The Red Mist

---

At around 4:00 in the morning, Garcia finally fell asleep.

She had talked more than what all she had said to Roland in the past few months altogether since their first encounter. It was more like a monologue than a constructive conversation. Most of her rambling was about how she had met her master after she had cut ties with her family.

The only thing Roland could do was to refill her glass and be a good listener.

Roland also discovered that Garcia's dedication to protecting this world was mostly a product of Lan's education. Although Lan had been very strict with her, Garcia had always looked up to her and viewed Lan as her goal and role model.

From what Roland saw, Lan must have liked the Dream World.

But he was not sure whether her method would work.

There were only two bedrooms in Room 0825, one of which was Zero's. Roland pondered for a while and decided to put Garcia in the master bedroom and spent the night in the living room himself. He did not think it a good idea to rummage Garcia's pocket for the key to her own apartment while she was asleep, for he had the slightest intention of creating any unnecessary misunderstanding.

Roland was certain that based on his past experience, this was the best way to handle this kind of situation.

In the meantime, he also realized that he had to return to the real world now.

Roland looked through the window after he settled Garcia down and gazed upon the city night. He could see glitters of lights dazzle in the distance. The flickers were even brighter than stars in the sky. It seemed to be a very peaceful, sweet night, but Roland knew

that this world, like the other one, was full of danger. The "Bloody Moon" that represented the Erosion had revealed its horrendous nature. The only difference was that the one in the real world hung in the sky while the one here lurked underground.

Roland shut the curtains and departed from the Dream World.

He dazed for a while before opening his eyes. However, instead of the ceiling, he gazed into two sparkling eyes.

The two stared at each other for a while until Roland heard someone scream above him. Then the person peering down at him immediately disappeared, as though everything was just his imagination

"Ahem, well, I was just checking whether you had waken up or not, as you've been sleeping for quite a while, and I was a bit worried," Nightingale said as she revealed herself from the desk. "Plus, why did you suddenly open your eyes. You scared me!"

Roland was speechless. How could he give her a heads up telling her that he was about to wake up?

"Anyway, you're awake now, so I'm going to bed," Nightingale said as she yawned dramatically. "By the way, Anna came to see you at 10:00 today, but she left when she saw you were still asleep. She asked me to tell you not to force yourself."

"Hang on, what's the time now?"

"Just a little over 12:00," Nightingale replied as she walked toward the door. "Well, good night."

As soon as Nightingale withdrew, Roland felt sleep creep over him. He had been roaming the two worlds for the last two days, and now he really needed a rest.

Roland stretched himself and was about to go to bed when he suddenly caught a glimpse of something unusual.

He slowly raised his head and almost shrieked at what he saw!



Two pale faces hung down from the window. As they were tightly pressed onto the glass, the faces were a little distorted. Roland saw four large eyes gazing into his. He jumped with a start!

Then he noticed that the two faces looked quite familiar to him.

Hang on, why did they look so familiar?

Roland's heart did a kind of drum drolling in his chest. He squinted at them for a while and suddenly realized that they were Lightning and Maggie!

Why did they come here at this hour?

It was midnight.

Realizing they were exposed, the two girls drifted down from the roof.

"When did you get here?" Roland asked after Lightning and Maggie got in. He put up a straight face and said, "Why didn't you notify me first?"

It wasn't until then that Roland noticed that both of them were unkempt and muddy as if they had not taken a shower for half a year. They had indeed come back from a long journey.

"Your Majesty, we arrived here around an hour ago, coo," Maggie replied, but Lightning soon stopped her.

"No, we just got here, and we didn't see anything." With these words, she glared at Maggie and added, "Did we?"

Maggie nodded fervently and said, "Coo... yes, I got it wrong."

Roland twitched his lips, amused by their poor acting. Even Nana would not believe their words. He did not actually mind them watching him sleep, so he asked, "Did you travel at night? Why not use the Animal Messenger? Did —"

He suddenly had a bad feeling.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Lightning said solemnly. "About half a

month ago, we found traces of demons at the ridge of the continent!"

Roland was now completely awake. He pursued, "Then? Did you see any outposts there?"

"Not for now," Lightning denied as she shook her head, produced a rumpled map from her pocket, and laid it open on the desk. "We couldn't go really far in there, so we met up with the Taquila witches at the Snow Ridge. It took them a while to set up the magic core, and we were finally able to confirm something." Lightning then pointed at the rapture marked in the center of the map and said, "There are God's Stone mines there, and they're almost as big as the one in the Holy City of Taquila!"

It was pretty clear what the demons were up to.

Roland knitted his brows. Edith was right. The demons did have a plan B. Even if Taquila fell, they could still invade the Four Kingdoms from another location. Although the Impassable Mountain Range was treacherous, it would be better to invade from there than waiting for another 400 years.

Fortunately, human beings discovered the demons' intention in advance. According to Agatha's intelligence, the demons would need some time to grow the Obelisk. They would only be able to produce a small amount of Red Mist before the Obelisk grew up.

"We also obtained another piece of news when we left the Snow Ridge," Lightning resumed hesitantly. "At that time, Maggie and I had already passed the Kingdom of Everwinter, so we couldn't hear it very clearly over the Sigil of Listening."

"What did you hear?"

Maggie clapped his hands over her ears as if holding a telephone receiver.

"The liaison witch told us that they found Red Mist in the north of the mountain range, coo!"

# Chapter 1230: An Emergency Meeting

---

Barov was waken up by his servant.

During the wartime, the staff of the Administrative Office stood vigil in turns so that they could notify Barov immediately in case anything out of ordinary happened.

Edith no longer worked in the Administrative Office, but she still had certain influences on Roland. Barov always tended to seek counsels of the General Staff before making a plan. The presence of such a genius rival constantly reminded Barov to work hard.

Nevertheless, this was not the only reason Barov was so dedicated to his work.

In fact, he enjoyed being busy, as being busy represented power. It meant that Neverwinter needed him. Also, His Majesty would trust him even more if he succeeded in his undertaking.

Barov slid off the bed and pulled on his clothes. "Speak up. What's the matter now?"

"Sir, this is an order from the king. He calls a meeting at the boardroom in the castle. All the ministers should be there at once."

"Right now?" Barov asked in surprise as he looked out of the window. Without a doubt, it was in the dead of night.

"Yes. The telephone operator didn't say much. Do you want to send someone to the castle first to make sure..."

"No, that's fine," Barov said quickly. The call was from the Administrative office, so it was not likely miscommunication. Since he was the only person who had installed a telephone at home, he must inform the other ministers verbally. "Ask the servants to notify the other ministers. Remember that everyone needs to be informed. If you ever miss one, it's on you!"

Barov would have hesitated for a while had the order been issued

by the old Prince Roland. However, now, Prince Roland had become a competent king. If he decided to call a meeting at this deadly hour, it must be about something of extreme urgency.

"Yes... yes, sir," the servant said in the earnest. "Are you going to the castle alone?"

"No, I'm going with the Pearl of the Northern Region," Barov returned. "I'll notify Edith Kant myself."

...

"Your Majesty, almost everyone is here," Nightingale said as she put on a coat for Roland. "Do you need a cup of tea?"

"Yes, please," Roland said while nodding. "Sorry to wake you up..."

"That's nothing," Nightingale said while smiling. "I'm not tired at all. I was just pretending."

"Pretending?"

"No, no," she denied quickly, a little flustered. "I mean I did yawn, but it was because my eyes were dry. I'm not tired at all. By the way, is Anna coming?"

"Let her rest," Roland said while shaking his head. "She doesn't need to worry about such things. Plus, she's been working so hard lately."

To further improve the Cube-powered motor, Anna had been working in the laboratory at the North Slope day and night. At the same time, she also had to work on the biplanes.

"You're working hard as well," Nightingale said as she handed the tea to Roland. "You didn't sleep at all in the Dream World, did you?"

"Don't worry. I'm used to staying up late..." Roland said smilingly. It was common to sleep at irregular hours in his previous world. This was actually not the worst. He simply needed

to take a rest later to make up the hours he had lost. "I won't be able to sleep well if I don't finish my work."

Roland thus drained the cup and sighed, "Let's go."

...

The boardroom lapsed into a dread silence after Lightning told them what she had discovered during her journey. Everybody was completely awake and wearing an extremely grave expression.

Agatha looked toward Roland apprehensively and said, "Your Majesty, we..."

"This isn't your fault," Roland comforted. "The rapid increase in the number of Senior Demons and Spider Demons has already indicated that our enemy is now very different from the one 400 years ago. Apparently, they also progressed."

There was no point in blaming the Taquila witches for providing inaccurate intelligence, as the event was unforeseen. Indeed, the soldiers in Neverwinter and the Taquila witches had reached a mutual understanding on the strength of the demons in the third Battle of Divine Will.

"Although the Exploration Group is not 100% sure about the 'presence of the Red Mist', the Red Mist did reach the crest of the Impassable Mountain Range. I believe that we'll hear from the front within a week. Now, the problem is that what we should do in the event that the demons do have the ability to activate the Obelisk in a short period of time. Before we discuss this matter, I want to make sure how much Red Mist an activated Obelisk could produce."

Agatha said hesitantly, "After the Union discovered the special demon at the bottom of the mine, we speculated that the Obelisk is probably a type of giant Magic Stone. If the small Magic Stone embedded in the demons is transformed from a Chaos Beast, then the Obelisk would be from raw ores. The Obelisk does have unique

properties, but its size also depends on the mine where it's growing from. However..."

Roland knew why Agatha was hesitating, but he urged, "That's OK. Speak up. It's better than nothing. Plus, everything is subject to change during a war. If our prediction is a little different from the reality, then we can make adjustments accordingly."

"Alright..." the Ice Witch said while nodding in great relief. "Based on the Union's experience and Lightning's information about the location of the mine, the Red Mist produced by an Obelisk transformed from a God's Stone mine the same size of Taquila could probably reach here..."

She then conjured an icicle and pointed it at the map.

"This is... the Archduke Island?" Edith asked thoughtfully.

"That's right. If we move the great rapture to the Taquila area, then the borderline would be around the Impassable Mountain Range area," Agatha explained. "Of course, the Red Mist won't reach there all of a sudden. It needs time to permeate the surrounding area, and the whole process may take a few days. The farther it goes, the slower it'll travel. Therefore, it'll be another few months before the Red Mist covered the area within a radius of 100 kilometers."

It appeared that they had done a good thing to seize Taquila in advance. Had they failed or been a little slower, say, they had just completed the railway construction now, the Red Mist would have not only invaded the Four Kingdoms from the Impassable Mountain Range but it would have also hindered the operation of the First Army. The Red Mist was fatal to the witches. Even though the army had advanced weapons, they would not be able to carry out military operations effectively while being interfered with by the Red Mist.

"With that being the case, we must hurry up," Roland said as he looked toward Edith. "Does the General Staff have any plan?"

"Of course we do," Edith said confidently. She was the first person to see through the demons' intention. "Although the demons are faster than we thought, from the perspective of military strategy, erecting the Obelisk at the ridge of the continent was actually their last resort. The ridge of the continent is a good hiding place, but the demons could not launch an attack effectively from there. This affords us time to remedy the situation. The General Staff believes that if the demons do appear in the Kingdom of Everwinter, our defensive line will definitely not be in Graycastle but here."

She tapped the map.

It was the Cage Mountain in the Kingdom of Dawn.

# Chapter 1231: Hope

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"The reason is fairly simple," Edith resumed before anyone could raise a question. "The Cage Mountain is not only a branch of the Impassable Mountain Range in the horizontal direction but also the highest point of the Kingdom of Dawn. The artillery of the First Army could have a broader view if they fire from there. Also, the demons will have restricted mobility, considering that there are fewer flying Devilbeasts than inferior Mad Demons."

"Secondly, the Red Mist tends to move toward the lowlands, and it becomes thinner as it stretches farther. Therefore, the witches shall build the defensive line at the highpoint of the land. I've heard that the front has already done so ahead of time."

"The last is His Majesty's Radiation Project." She surveyed the room at these words and continued, "We know that this project relies on the ores at the Cage Mountain. Before we find an alternative resource, we can't abandon the Cage Mountain."

Nobody questioned Edith's decision.

Nobody saw the final product of the Radiation Project, and they could not possibly imagine how much energy those tiny little spheres could produce, but all of them viewed the project as one of the most important missions, simply because Roland said so. Roland swelled up with pride at this thought.

This was probably the biggest achievement an engineering student could ever attain.

"But we can't desert the Kingdom of Everwinter or the Kingdom of Wolfheart completely either," Roland said as he cast a glance at Edith. "We need people to win the war."

"Yes. Therefore, while the Red Mist is spreading, the First Army should focus on bringing in immigrants and stopping the demons from advancing. I don't think the demons will set up outposts after



the Red Mist spreads out. They'll build them right now, which was exactly what they did 400 years ago."

Edith paused for a second and said, "To be honest, the sudden appearance of the Bloody Moon helped the First Army. When people in the Kingdom of Everwinter and the Kingdom of Wolfheart see what kind of enemy they're dealing with, they'll automatically side with us. By that time, they'll beg Graycastle for help even if Iron Axe wants to shut them out."

At these words, Edith's lips curled up into a faint, inscrutable smile.

In that case, a lot of people would die.

Roland heaved a sigh.

Roland understood why Edith gloated over the misfortune of the refugees. He remembered a piece of news in his previous world saying that some residents opposed to build a cell tower and therefore lost cellphone reception. However, in a war that would determine the fate of the human race, Roland could not stand by watching those people suffer, even though it was because of their own stupidity.

"We harvested tons of Golden Twos this year," Roland said as he turned to Barov. "Draft a proposal and send some food to the Kingdom of Dawn. Make sure those refugees who left their native towns are fed."

"Your Majesty, if my understanding is correct, once we confirm the Red Mist would spread out, the First Army will immediately set off for the Cage Mountain. This will create a lot of pressure on the logistics," Barov replied hesitantly. "I can't guarantee we can provide food to the refugees while at the same time supplying our army. We won't have enough ships even if we borrow all the ships from the Chambers of Commerce at the Fjords."

This was a real problem. Even the largest sailboat in the Fjords

would not meet the needs of the war. All the fleets were now filled with immigrants.

"Unless... we build a railway leading directly to the neighbor..." Barov said with great difficulties. He knew such a large project would cost tons of money. His heart ached every time money went out from the treasury.

"We probably don't have much time," Roland said while shaking his head. "The railway construction on the Fertile Plain has cost too many resources. If we build another railway, we won't be able to support the other projects."

The railway, which stretched away from the Misty Forest all the way to the ruins of Taquila, cost a great amount of steel. Its construction took a year and a half, not to mention that Leaf had amended the first half of the railway and that the second half was built on a flat plain. The road condition between Neverwinter and the Cage Mountain was more complicated than the Fertile Plains, so it would be hard to say how long it would take to build this new railway.

"I totally agree with you, Your Majesty..." Barov rejoined, apparently much relieved.

"Let's make a plan based on the current situation. Don't try to save money. Use the money well," Roland said. "As for the logistics, I'll see what I can do."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Roland then looked toward Edith and said, "The General Staff should also draft a proposal based on the presumption that the farthest the Red Mist could go is the Cage Mountain. Then we'll discuss further in detail."

Smart as the Pearl of the Northern Region was, she had no problem in making a plan. Even if Roland did not remind her, she would understand the urgency of the matter.

"Leave it to me," Edith said while placing her hand on her chest.

Roland rose to his feet and surveyed the boardroom. "I told you before that the third Battle of Divine Will will determine the fate of the mankind. Now, it's coming." The victory of the Taquila war has proved to us that we could win, despite the miserable defeat 400 years ago. I hope we all do our best and devote ourselves to this war. I'm sure today will be remembered!" Roland proclaimed. "Listen, no matter who our enemy is, I only have one request, that is, we must win the battle!"

"As you wish, Your Majesty!" everyone shouted together.

It was going to be a busy night.

After everyone filed out of the boardroom, Roland held Tilly back.

"I want to have a private word with you."

...

After Roland returned to his office, he dismissed Nightingale and shut the door.

Tilly raised her brows and asked, "Something that you don't even want Nightingale to hear? It seems you're not planning to inquire about the training of the Aerial Knights."

Roland did not answer but poured a glass of minty Chaos Drink for both of them. It did not taste particularly good, but it was pretty calming.

Seeing Roland remain silent, Tilly did not pursue but simply sipped the drink, waiting for him to break the silence.

Roland had a complex feeling toward his "sister". Tilly was not his real sister. Compared to the Princess Tilly he used to know, the current Tilly Wimbledon had become more like a leader. However, he preferred the little girl who used to curl herself up beside Anna in winter, with her feet sticking out from underneath the blanket,

and think about what kind of tough questions she could ask the other witches.

Although Roland knew that people would change, Tilly's change was too drastic. Within a few days after Ashes' death, she had grown up. He could see the virulent rancor against the demons in Tilly's eyes. She seldom revealed such hatred, but Roland was very disturbed by her "only request" of seeking revenge from the demons.

She had made up her mind.

The world had suddenly become meaningless to her.

Roland learned from Lan that Ashes could be brought back to life. He should have verified the information before telling Tilly so that he would not give her a false hope. However, Roland realized that as Ashes' death had sunk Tilly into the lowest dejection, Tilly might not survive the Battle of Divine Will in the end.

If he told her about the prospective good news now, she might probably elevate herself from such despondency.

Yet there was a risk he had to take. If Ashes did not come back to life in the end, Tilly would be devastated.

That was why Roland did not say anything for quite a while.

But he had to speak.

Roland knew he had made the decision when he had stopped Tilly.

He would rather put his faith in a faint ray of hope in the future than regret later.

"Brother?" Tilly reminded him, a little bewildered. She averted her eyes slightly to avoid Roland's burning gaze.

Roland took a deep breath and said slowly, "What I'm going to say next may be incredible, but I still want to tell you that — "

"Ashes may be still alive."

# Chapter 1232: Brother

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Tilly quavered. She slowly turned around, and there was a multitude of feelings in her eyes. As if confirming what she had just heard, Tilly asked, "What... did you say?"

"I said that Ashes might be still alive," Roland repeated slowly. He knew he could not retract now.

"No... brother," Tilly mumbled as she managed a smile. "I know you want to comfort me, but you can't..."

"But it's not what you think," Roland cut across her. "To be honest, I was as incredulous as you when I heard the news, and I know it's unfair to tell you before I confirm that it's true. However, I don't want to regret it later."

Tilly fell silent.

She stared at Roland out of his countenance as if processing the information. She suddenly realized that what Roland had said was probably something unusual.

Tilly was one of the smartest and most open-minded witches among all.

After about seven minutes, she asked tentatively, "Who told you that?"

"Lan."

"I've never heard of her..." Tilly muttered as she lapsed into thought. "Does it have something to do with the Dream World?"

Roland was not surprised that Tilly had quickly made the connection. He answered calmly, "Slow down. I'll tell you everything."

...

By the time Roland finished, the first hint of dawn was visible in the east. The first ray of sun broke over the horizon behind the

mountains and gilded the roofs of the buildings in the distance.

Tilly was still lost in thought. She muttered to Roland as much as to herself, "That means... as long as you control the Realm of Mind, you'll be able to bring Ashes back?"

"Technically, yes," Roland replied while nodding. "According to Lan, after a witch becomes a Transcendent, she'll leave a mark in the Realm of Mind. This is consistent with Kabradhabi's statement."

During the interrogation, Kabradhabi had told Zooey that their souls would return to the Origin of Magic. Once their kind dominated the world, he would come back. Although it was quite different from what Lan had told Roland, there was one thing in common.

That was, the Realm of Mind accepted souls.

"In addition, in the ancient book of the underground civilization, the author also wrote that the journey to the Divine Will is the process of a magic power upgrade. The winner will eventually rival God. If we view the Realm of Mind as the pinnacle of magic power, then Lan's words, in a way, fits the description." Roland paused for a second before he continued, "Nevertheless, considering that this information may be all from God, we can't completely trust it. The best way is to verify its validity myself."

"Brother..."

"Don't worry. I'll penetrate the Realm of Mind as soon as I can and try my best to retrieve Ashes, if she's really there. Therefore, I want you to protect yourself before I find her, as I don't want to infuriate a Transcendent who has exceeded her limit and is beyond the restriction of God's Stones of Retaliation..." Roland said in a half-joking manner. Then he suddenly found that Tilly did not look right.

She was trembling, her head hanging, and she was mumbling

under her breath as well. Roland held his breath and listened.

"That's great... That's great..."

Roland suddenly did not know what to say.

Tears started to trickle down Tilly's cheeks and splattered against the back of her hand.

Looking at the quivering princess, Roland sighed internally as he slowly stretched out his hand and patted her head.

The next moment, Tilly threw herself onto him and held him tight. The trembling gradually perished into sobs, and Roland felt as though he had traveled back in time to that night again. However, Roland sensed that something had changed.

Unlike last time where Tilly had cried for hours, this time, she dried her eyes within 10 minutes. When she looked up, she forced Roland to turn away.

"Don't... don't look at me."

Then he heard Tilly sniffle and clean up her face behind him.

It was a while before Roland was allowed to turn around.

"Sorry... I made you worried," Tilly said in a low voice.

"I'm pleased that you've realized it," Roland said while folding his arms. "You should also reconsider your request last time — "

"Are you referring to the plane used to kill the demons?" Tilly said while blinking. "No, my request stands, brother."

"Oi..."

"You need my help to reach the Fathomless Abyss. Now, it's very likely that the demons have already erected a full-grown Obelisk. With that being the case, it's going to be even harder for us to restrict the Devilbeasts. If we can't dominate the sky, the First Army might not be able to crush the enemy so easily," Tilly said as she stuck out one finger to stop Roland. "You're right. I didn't care

about whether I'll survive when I made that request. I just wanted to kill as many demons as possible. But now, I've changed my mind."

"And you know what a difference it could make with someone assisting you. Not a single Aerial Knight knows how to fight demons. I'm the only person who can teach and train them," Tilly went on while patting the chest. "I promise you that I'll look after myself and wait for you to enter the Realm of Mind."

Roland found it hard to decline her request. The sparkles in Tilly's eyes came back, her demeanor as poised as ever, and she was radiant from within.

"Alright then... but you must keep your promise."

"Of course." Tilly resumed after a brief pause, "Also... thank you for telling me that."

"I'm not sure whether this method would work —"

"I'm more than content. At least, we now have a mutual goal," Tilly said as she again pressed herself to Roland's chest. "I'm glad you're my brother..."

...

After Tilly took her leave, Nightingale returned to the office and asked, "What did you say to Princess Tilly? I saw her just come out, and she looks like a different person..."

"The connection between the Dream World and the reality. If you want to know, I can tell you as well, but not now," Roland said as he fumbled with the drawings. "I just received a message from Honey, saying that a fleet will be arriving at the port of the inner river in two days. They should bring the immigrants from the Kingdom of Wolfheart. Before that, I should finish the drawing for the new project."

Nightingale shrugged and said, "Never mind me. Haven't I told you? I won't insist if you don't want to say." She walked to the desk



and studied the drawing for quite a while before she said, "It looks like... the vehicle Anna drove the other day in the yard."

"It's the same thing, only a lot larger," Roland said smilingly. "Didn't Barov talk about the logistics in the meeting? This is the solution."

Apart from expensive trains, there was also a cheap alternative, a wheeled truck. There were various types of wheeled trucks. Although they were not as efficient as trains, they were more flexible and also easier to operate than a tractor. They could run on a flat, hard-surfaced road easily.

There were many inner rivers in Graycastle and the Kingdom of Dawn, but none of these rivers were connected. Therefore, a fleet of wheeled trucks could facilitate the transportation between the two countries.

# Chapter 1233: Being Trapped

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"I see," Nightingale spoke after a moment of contemplation. "Compared to building a brand new railway, it's much easier to build a road to connect the rivers. Railway construction needs Anna and skillful workers, but everybody can build a regular road. Even the refugees can do it. In this way, we can save a lot of time!"

"Exactly. This is another strength," Roland said in approval. "As long as we plan it well, we'll alleviate the stress of the logistics department in one or two months. This is very important for us considering we have such a tight timeline. It appears that you do, sometimes, grasp the nature of the problem."

"Haha, of course... hang on," Nightingale said and her smiles immediately faded out. "What do you mean by 'sometimes'? I can think, and I can help you with your work and cope with my exam..."

Although she looked pretty frustrated, her voice trailed off.

Roland giggled involuntarily.

Nightingale had to first make sure that she did not fall asleep before she set to study.

Roland shoveled his eyes back to the map on the desk. If he wanted to connect the rivers in Graycastle and the Kingdom of Dawn, the fastest way was to build a road in the Eastern Region near the Redwater River that ran all the way to the City of Evernight. The road should then wind toward the north, reach the Windswept Ridge, and finally connect the Sparkling River in the neighboring country.

The Sparking River originated from the Hermes Plateau and diverged at the capital city into three branches. Two wider ones stretched away between the south and north of the Kingdom of Dawn and flew to the ocean. To further facilitate water

transportation, the Moya Family had dug out a canal running from the east to the west over the past 100 years, which not only boomed the business activities along the river but also provided a shortcut for Roland's road construction plan.

With that being the case, Roland only needed to build two roads, one from the Sparkling River to the Northside River and the other leading to the Cage Mountain. In this way, there would be a passage connecting the two countries. Compared to a costly railway, the two roads were no longer than 200 kilometers put together, and all he needed to do was to set up three ports for freights.

Since loaded trucks were heavy and could easily damage the road particularly on rainy days, Roland decided to use mortar and cement to harden the road surface instead of gravels to avoid subsequent maintenance. The road, therefore, would be of the same quality as those in Neverwinter.

Cement was now widely used in Neverwinter, but it was time-consuming to ship it to the Kingdom of Dawn, so Roland decided to produce cement locally.

After finishing the drawing, Roland wrote a letter to the king of the neighboring country, Andrea's father, Horford Quinn.

He was going to dispatch some technicians to the City of Glow and taught the three families in the king's city how to manufacture cement and assemble paddle steamers. Then they would be able to build a plant and mend the road for Neverwinter.

Roland believed that the nobles would see the potential value of cement.

With these two technologies, the Kingdom of Dawn could solve the transportation problem by themselves.

Nevertheless, Roland planned to provide completed steam engines because none of the cities except Neverwinter in this era

were industrialized. It would thus be meaningless to send over raw materials.

Roland believed that the Kingdom of Dawn would take action immediately. If the Red Mist had already appeared at the crest of the Impassable Mountain Range, Horford would receive the news soon. By that time, he would know what he should do.

...

Two days later, Roland saw the first batch of immigrants from the roof of the Miracle Building.

Smoke coiled up into the air from the endless fleet and dropped a thick veil at the bank. People trodded on the trestle and off on the dock under the guidance of the police. A colorful sea of heads heaved up and down at the bank of the Redwater River.

"50,000 people... That's the population of a whole city, Your Majesty," Barov commented in excitement, although also a little worried. "I've never expected to see hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the Kingdom of Everwinter and Kingdom of Wolfheart coming to Graycastle. If things go well, we'll soon reach our target of an increase of 200,000 people each year. Now, I should worry about your treasury."

"As well as public safety and urban management," the Chief Knight, Carter, rejoined a little apprehensively. "Those immigrants may not acknowledge your authority. Out of safety concern, I suggest settling them down in a certain area so it would be easier to manage them."

"Then they'll never become true Graycastle people," Roland said while shaking his head. "If the police needs help, ask Barov. Punish the wrong-doers and reward those who make contributions. Send chronic offenders to the mine and subject them to heavy labor. I need workers not imprisoned slaves."

Without a doubt, the king's city would be more chaotic with such

a huge influx of immigrants. This was an inevitable side effect of his immigration policy. Roland would not have carried out such a hasty plan had he had enough time. Now, the war was around the corner, so he had to implement the policy despite the potential problems it would bring.

The benefits of an population increase overpowered its downside.

For example, he could send 10,000 people out of the 50,000 new immigrants to the plants to increase the production of firearms. Then, the soldiers at the front would have more weapons and ammunition, as well as other new equipment.

Now he had both manpower and technologies and could officially start the project for the Cube-powered steam engines.

...

"Where am I?"

Valkries woke up again and found herself in a snow white room. The ceiling and the wall blinded her. There was a queer instrument ticking beside her. A transparent bag was hung above her, and the liquid in it dripped down the tube and slowly into her vein.

There was so much information unfamiliar to her swarming into her head that for a moment, she could not give a proper response. She had never seen anything like this before. Everything was so different from what she were used to.

For example, the white shirt she was currently wearing had pretty tight stitches, which was complete different from the clothes she usually wore.

Valkries closed her eyes and concentrated. No matter how strange the surrounding was, the only thing she could rely on was her power.

Valkries' heart suddenly sank to the bottom.

She noticed that she was not in her own body.

Although this body looked exactly the same, the magic stone was gone. She would have died had the magic stone really disappeared.

However, surprisingly, she felt fine.

She could still sense the magic power slowly move within her body in an unfamiliar way.

The murmur of the Realm of Mind was also gone.

No matter how hard Valkries tried to concentrate, there was no response. She even condescended to call upon the Sky Lord, but she heard nothing back from the latter.

This meant that she was trapped.

# Chapter 1234: A Strange World

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Yes, she was trapped.

Valkries now remembered that she had been delving into the depth of the Realm of Mind and tracking down a faint fluctuation. When she had crossed the borderline that separated the upper and lower level, her step had become heavier and heavier. The resistance from the Realm of Mind increased, and she felt something was dragging her down.

It was her first time to come thus far, so she must be careful. If she got lost, she might be trapped here forever. Valkries would have terminated this expedition and taken a break had she not sensed that the fluctuation she was looking for was getting closer.

The entrance should be just around here.

So she decided to dive deeper.

Hackzord seemed not to be very impressed with her bathing in the Red Mist Pond all day, especially when human beings had not realized that they had successfully transplanted the Birth Tower.

On the other hand, Valkries also wanted to know whether the human race had upgraded through the legacy shard.

She had never anticipated, however, that the Realm of Mind suddenly quaked while she was trying to find the source of the fluctuation.

She felt as if the muddy ground underneath suddenly cracked, sank, and formed a waterfall. She was immediately flushed down before she could realize it. When she woke up again, she found herself in this strange place.

Beyond a doubt, this place should be a part of the Realm of Mind, but Valkries was not sure whether it had anything to do with the male human she was searching for.

Through the window, Valkries could see a big city outside. Sierried highrises stretched away and disappeared at the end of the horizon, each as tall as the Birth Tower. Some were even taller than the king's Presiding Holy See.

If this was that male human's territory, Valkries did not understand why he had not noticed the presence of an intruder. The creator should have been omnipotent. Since Valkries was the mortal enemy of the human race, the creator should have taken action by now. If a witch, by accident, trespassed the Presiding Holy See, death would probably be the kindest punishment inflicted upon her.

The problem was that if this place had nothing to do with that male, then where was it?

When Valkries had sensed the quaver, she had felt the shockwave come from above. She was certain that she was on the right track, unless she had been searching in the wrong direction all along.

Valkries pondered for a while but could not find a satisfying explanation, so she put aside these questions. The most important task for her now was to adapt to this new body and find an opportunity to get out of this strange world.

Valkries was positive about one thing that this new body was much weaker than her own. The wound on her legs had still not healed up yet, which indicated that she currently had little self-repairing ability. Her Magic Barrier stopped working. Valkries had never been so weak for a long time. She felt as if she had traveled back to the time prior to her upgrade when everybody could cause substantial harm to her.

Fortunately, she could still summon magic power, which was an ability quite similar to Extraordinaries'.

While Valkries was checking her body, there was a pattering of footsteps outside.



The door was then pushed open, and two men entered smilingly.

Valkries almosted wanted to throw herself onto them and rip them apart, but she suppressed the urge.

This was not the real world!

She reminded herself. It appeared that these people had saved her when she had lost consciousness.

Perhaps, these people never knew such things as "demons". If she acted recklessly, she would expose herself.

"You look pretty well, Miss Valkries," the female said as she lifted one corner of the blanket and examined her plastored legs. "Amazing. No wonder the pillar didn't wound your bones. You're a martialist! If I were you, my legs would have been smashed to pieces."

"Is this what a doctor should say to her patient?" the male said as he glared at the female and then looked toward Valkries. "I'm the doctor in charge here. You can call me Dr. Gao. According to the X-ray, you'll soon recover. Take a good rest, and I'm sure the injury won't affect your future contests. If you don't feel well, please don't hesitate to tell me."

Valkries shook her head.

She hardly understood anything Dr. Gao had said, so she resolved to remain silent.

Valkries also noticed that these human beings appeared to be pretty friendly to her. She was puzzled as to why these people did not view her as a person of another race. Even if they did not harbor hostility against her, how could they speak to her in such an amicable manner when there was such a drastic difference between the two races?

Valkries even noticed that the female was particularly interested in her. Her eyes were glued on her.

"I'm glad you're well," the male named Dr. Gao said as he leafed through the brochure in his hand. "The Association will come to visit the hospital this afternoon, and they'll also hold a meeting in the evening. I've already declined the request to attend the meeting for you. Those people are so insensible! They wanted you to sit the meeting through in your wheelchair! That's ridiculous! But I can't stop them from visiting you. This hospital is funded by the Martialist Association, so it's impossible for me to stop them. You just need to lie in bed."

"... Thank you," Valkries said in a way an ordinary man would normally speak in this situation.

"You're welcome," the male said with a smile. "By the way, you must be bored. The Association didn't send your cell phone here. Do you want to watch TV?"

Cell phone? TV? What were they?

Nonplussed, Valkries did not answer.

The doctor took her silence as a yes, so he picked up a square box on the nightstand, pointed it at a blackboard on the wall, and fiddled it.

Soon, light escaped from the blackboard!

"Now, you take a good rest," Dr. Gao said as he waved his hand and withdrew from the room with the female.

Valkries goggled at the screen and almost lost herself.

How did they... do this?

The image on the blackboard changed. Everything was so lifelike. Valkries would not have been so surprised had the blackboard been a magic artifact, but this object was non-magical. She could not sense any fluctuation of magic power from the blackboard.

It took Valkries a while to get used to it.

She also discovered that the content of the television had

something to do with the little square box. The image would change if she pressed the button on it.

If her assumption was correct, these contents might be closely related to this world.

This was an effective way to get to know about this world.

While Valkries was flipping through channels, she captured one strange word, "the Martialist Association."

Based on what the male had told her, she was also a member of the Association, or more precisely, they assumed that she was a member of the Association.

She saw a crowded square on the television. The picture was shot from above. Perhaps, someone videotaped the scene with some magic artifact like a Stone of Flight.

"This is the third day since the attack at the Prism City. Firefighters are still rescuing members and cleaning up the debris."

"The Association has confirmed the death toll. The victims' identities still remain unknown at this point."

"During the whole rescue process, many martialists displayed courage and sense of responsibilities. They went down to the evacuation exits to look for those being trapped."

"The Chief Disciple of the Defender Rock, Ms. Lan, was killed in action."

"When she entered Exit 4, she was attacked by the Fallen Evils. To protect her peers..."

Valkries did not hear a single word said by the reporter.

Her attention was caught by the image on the "blackboard".

Valkries was shocked. "Why, why do I see those strange and familiar faces in the Realm of Mind?"

Wasn't the Cloud School... already disbanded?

# Chapter 1235: The Cloud School

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Valkries shook her head and forced herself to calm down. She was certain that the Cloud School was gone. After their kind occupied the northwest of the Land of Dawn, Valkries visited the mountain where the school used to be situated every 100 years and would stay at the ruins of the school building for a couple of days every time she went there.

Because she used to be one of the students in the school.

She had learned how to connect to the Realm of Mind and also about human beings on that mountain. Her teacher was the "Transformer", Heathtalese, who was also an Upgraded.

Heathtalese was not exceptionally powerful. In fact, she was even weaker than a relatively strong Inferior Demon. Because of this, the clansmen treated her with utter contempt. However, Valkries knew that the upgrade ceremony had nothing to do with fighting capacity. Heathtalese had successfully merged with magic stones three times, and she was a genius Upgraded in every aspect.

As her title suggested, the Transformer had obtained the ability to transform after merging with her second magic stone. Hence, she rarely revealed what she truly looked like. Most of time she disguised herself as a human. Since she could speak the human language fluently, many people would think that she was human at first.

Lan on the television was the identity she had used most often.

Valkries stared at that familiar face, and her thoughts strayed back to 1,000 years ago. Although the woman's countenance and clothes were slightly different, Valkries was sure it was the same face.

If the founders of the Cloud School were aliens among humans, then the "Transformer" was an alien among her clan. Heathtalese

did not really care about the fighting capacity that her magic stones would afford her, but she had a devouring curiosity about everything unknown. The "Transformer" was also the first person that made the initial contact with the Cloud School.

At that time, rumors about the Battle of Divine Will had been spread throughout the whole clan, and they had viewed the mankind on the Land of Dawn as their potential enemies.

Valkries was very grateful to her first teacher who had taught her so many things. She did not disdain Heathtalese because the latter was not good at fighting. Valkries knew very well that the "Transformer" had had a more profound understanding of the Realm of Mind as well as the Origin of Magic than anyone else in the clan. She had written dozens of books, half of which provided guidance to the later generations and helped them go through the upgrade ceremony. She was what human beings called a "mentor" for most of the clansmen.

In fact, the "Transformer" was probably the first person who had made an attempt to merge with four magic stones.

Had she succeeded, she would have become the first "Senior Lord" of the clan. At that time, there had been very few Inferior Demons, let alone a Senior Lord.

Unfortunately, the "Transformer" had failed. She had been devoured by her own magic power, without leaving the slightest trace behind her.

Valkries remembered that day because she had been right beside the Transformer at that time. She had witnessed how the "Transformer" gradually had fallen apart and collapsed. That was also why Valkires felt that the "Lan" on the television was a little unfamiliar. She had never seen two people that looked so alike over the past 1,000 years.

Valkries had asked the Transformer why she wanted to present herself in this way, for she believed that the face she had created

did not belong to any prominent historical figures.

Heathhtalese' answer, however, was incomprehensible.

She said this was the face of an apostle.

As for who the apostle was, the Transformer did not know either. When she dived into the Realm of Mind, she sometimes could feel an entirely different strand of mind. It was whispering, but she had never officially met it. Nevertheless, the Transformer later remembered what it looked like.

The Transformer also said that if she could stabilize herself in the chaotic Realm of Mind, she would be able to connect to that whispering sound. Unfortunately, she was not powerful enough to do so.

Valkries did not understand what that meant at that time, for she had just upgraded and known nothing about the Realm of Mind. In other words, the Transformer was a pioneer in the exploration of the Realm of Mind. The king, as a matter of fact, had not marked out its own territory in the Realm of Mind until the night before the second Battle of Divine Will.

Valkries had also asked the king whether he had seen that apostle, but the king denied.

Therefore, there could be two possibilities.

One was that this world belonged to the apostle "Lan". However, according to the news on the television, Lan was dead. That did not make sense, for the creator of a territory would never die or leave the Realm of Mind.

The other was that the Transformer had returned to the Realm of Mind before being devoured by her own magic power and had thereby created her own territory. This theory might explain why the presence of Lan did not raise any suspicions, but it failed to explain the strange surroundings.

Valkries had wanted to leave this weird place as soon as possible

in the beginning, but now she changed her mind.

She was concerned about what the Transformer had said when the latter had failed her fourth upgrade. The Transformer had said that even if they won the Battle of Divine Will, they would not gain the Divine Domain. Valkries wanted to know what had made her mentor say this.

Perhaps, this was an opportunity for her to find out the reason.

...

Roland yawned as he drove his mini van on the 2nd ring highway.

Although he pressed hard on the gas and the engine also roared, he still fell behind from other vehicles.

"What's wrong? You didn't sleep well?" Garcia, who was now sitting in the passenger seat, asked. For some reason, Roland felt that Garcia had become much more polite to him since she had stayed over at his place that night.

"It's my day off. I planned to sleep in. Thanks to the Association, I have to get up early again," Roland complained, unable to help himself. He was very tired after the meeting regarding the immigration policy. As time in the Dream World traveled three times faster than that in the real world, he had decided to take a good rest in his dream. It would not only save him a lot of time but would also give the Taquila witches an opportunity to enjoy themselves.

Now, the witches could have fun on their own.

Also, apart from entertainment, the ancient witches also shouldered the responsibility of searching for the magic creatures that had appeared during the Erosion. Roland remembered that Lan had told him that the God was watching this world. To eliminate the threat and reach God's territory, the most effective way was to kill the Fallen Evils and use their power to expand the

Dream World.

However, the reality was always cruel. Garcia had called him at noon and informed him that he had to visit the survived Association members in the hospital. All the celebrated martialists and the executives would be there.

Roland had intended to decline, as he had thought it was simply Garcia's own idea. He had not anticipated, however, that it was a request from the Association and that the Association had appointed him, a licensed hunter, instead of Garcia.

"The Association wants to re-establish confidence in the Prism City after this massive attack," Garcia commented while raising her brows. "I believe what they really plan to do is to hold a conference in the evening."

Roland fell silent. It was not enough to calm down the public by just visiting patients. What they needed to do now was to display their power and fight back. In consideration of that, the meeting in the evening must have something do with the magic creatures.

This provided Roland with a perfect opportunity to conduct his own search.



# Chapter 1236: Striking Similarities

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About 20 minutes later, Roland reached his destination.

He looked around but did not find any building that resembled a hospital. Instead, what he saw were several splendid, magnificent modern edifices.

"Right here," Garcia said with a nod.

"Are you sure?" Roland asked a little suspiciously as he drove toward the entrance, and then he noticed a name plate that read, "Green Meadow Sanatorium".

"Of course. Everybody was as surprised as you when they first came here."

A few burly guards wearing sunglasses and suits soon approached them and surrounded the car. One of them knocked on the window and said, "Sorry, this is a private premise. You can't park here."

Roland twitched his lips. Oi, oi, why was he always treated as crap? He was not here to park the vehicle but to visit patients. What was the problem with driving a mini van?

When Roland was about to display his hunting license, Garcia rolled the window down and handed them a card. "It's a new vehicle, so we haven't registered it yet. Please register it."

The guards were stunned for a moment before they took the card and cast a few suspicious glances at the car. They then returned to the monitoring room. When they came out again, they spoke to them in a completely different manner. "My apology, Miss Garcia. You registered another car before, so we..."

"Isn't it normal to switch a car?" Garcia interrupted him politely.

"Yes... of course," the guard agreed immediately and then looked at Roland. "May I know who this gentleman..."

"My chauffeur."

There was an awkward silence. It was a few minutes later that the chief finally realized his mistake and said, "I see. I'll add the new license plate for you."

A moment later, the gate was open, and Roland released the clutch and shuffled his vehicle into the sanatorium.

He could see the incredulous look on those guards' faces.

A martialist who asked her chauffeur to drive a battered mini van... Garcia was probably the most shabby martialist they had ever known.

"I thought you never lied."

"That's because you don't know me," Garcia returned while shrugging. "I'm not that inflexible. It doesn't hurt to lie a little bit here and there. Plus, you're a member of the Association. You just haven't got your identity card yet."

"The hunting license doesn't work?"

"Licensed hunters should keep their identity confidential, although there are a few exceptions. It's the total opposite of celebrated martialists." Garcia said solemnly, "The hunting license does show that the Association trusts you, but it also means a high risk. Many licensed martialists who exposed themselves have been besieged by Fallen Evils."

This meant that if he revealed his identity as a licensed martialist, many Fallen Evils would come after him.

However, for the safety of Zero and other residents in the apartment building, Roland thought he'd be better not do so.

After his meeting with Lan, he could not view people in the Dream World as mere fictitious characters anymore.

Roland found the sanatorium was well facilitated. It was not very large, but it basically had everything, including a handsome garden, waterfalls and bridges. There were also signs that pointed

out the direction to the hot spring, the swimming pool, and the golf court. It was more like a luxurious resort than a sanatorium.

Roland was deeply impressed.

Even though he was now the King of Graycastle, he had never thought of building a hospital like this.

The hospital building was at the center of the sanatorium. Its shiny, sparkly glass wall reminded Roland of a high-end hotel.

Roland and Garcia went into the hall, and soon a brawny man strode up to them. He was around 40, with dark skin, his martialist cloak whipping behind him. Roland immediately sensed his Force of Nature when the martialist was still around 10 meters from him.

"This is my master's master," Garcia said in a low voice and then bowed her head. "Mr. Defender..."

"I'm sorry about Lan," Rock said heavily as he slightly crouched down and patted Garcia on the shoulder. "It was my fault."

A little downhearted when hearing Lan's name, Garcia shook her head and said, "This wasn't your fault, sir. She always said to me that a martialist should devote himself to fighting the Erosion. If he's scared, he doesn't deserve to be an Association member."

"You're a good student," Rock sighed. "Don't worry. The invaders will pay for that."

"I'm also willing to help fight the Erosion."

Rock nodded in approval before he rose and looked toward Roland. "You should be that famous Fallen Evil hunter, Mr. Roland. Nice to meet you. I'm one of the four Defenders of the Prism City, Rock."

"Nice to meet you," Roland returned courteously and shook Rock's hand.

"I have to thank you for easing the tension between the traditional and modern martialists," Rock said frankly. "I hope you

could still continue to protect this world."

"The honor is mine," Roland said resolutely.

He could not tolerate anybody that dared to destroy his Dream World.

Roland's promise greatly cheered Garcia up. She was very proud that Roland had finally decided to take some social responsibilities.

The visit started at 3:00. There were around 20 people, all led by Rock. Apparently, not all the executives of the Prism City attended this event except a few representatives, including the celebrated martialist Fei Yuhan.

If truth be told, Roland was a little afraid of that genius girl. He remembered that during the joint mission last time, he had asked Ling to knock out all the survivors. However, Fei Yuhan overheard their conversation and started to suspect his true identity. Roland had resolved to deny the fact, but to his surprise, Fei Yuhan did not ask him about anything. Yet Roland was certain that she still remembered that incident.

Therefore, he managed to keep a distance from Fei Yuhan and remain silent. Fortunately, Fei Yuhan was very popular and was always surrounded by a lot of people, so she did not get a chance to speak to Roland.

They shook hands with patients and said a few encouraging words. Since Garcia was not with Roland, and he was just a newbie in the Association, few executives knew him. As such, Roland simply followed the others and waited to be introduced. This was probably also the Association's intention of bringing him here.

"The next patient is Valkries," the doctor said as he peered down the list. "She was severely injured. We should have let her rest, but since you're already here, let's say hello to her. Please keep quiet after you get in."

"We will. We believe that the health of the Association member is

the most important," Rock said as he gave a nod of approval and then pushed open the door.

There was only one patient in the room. The room was a lot larger than Roland's apartment and could easily accommodate 20 people. Roland was the last to enter, and he waited to shake hands with her as usual.

However, Roland was shocked when he saw her.

It was a familiar face. The patient has thin, slender brows, a pair of cold eyes, a tall nose and beautiful lips. It was a beautiful and delicate face, even though her skin was blue. In fact, she looked even more attractive with pale blue skin.

For quite a while, Roland stood rooted the ground. Then, he started to search his memories.

He remembered the memory fragment in the apartment building.

It recorded an upgrade ceremony held in a demon's city, and the host was exactly this Valkries!

Roland had almost thought that the Senior Demon had infiltrated the Dream World and invaded this world through the memory fragment!

Shocked and dismayed, Roland studied the patient attentively and then found that she was a little different from the person he remembered.

The biggest difference was that the patient in front of him did not have a third eye on her forehead.

# Chapter 1237: Observation

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Roland was positive that the Senior Demon he remembered was, at that time, standing on a platform and teaching two upgraded demons fighting techniques. Her white muslin clothes swirling behind her formed a glaring contrast with the churning Red Mist pond down below, and her third eye on the forehead was glistening. He would never forget such an incredible scene.

Although the patient did not have that distinctive third eye, she, for some reason, resembled that Senior Demon. Roland was thus aroused by this demon martialist named "Valkries".

When it was his turn to shake hands, Roland did not leave immediately but stopped at her bedside.

"Are you living the in the modular apartment?"

Everyone, who was about to withdraw from the room, was all taken back as Roland spoke.

Valkries remained expressionless. After a moment of reflection, she shook her head.

Roland remembered that the female demon was actually a lot older than Zero, so she should not be one of Zero's captures.

"Do you have a twin sister by any chance, or someone who looks like you?" Roland pursued as he pointed at his own forehead. "For example, someone with an eye on her forehead?"

The crowd was stirred. The Defender coughed in embarrassment and reminded promptly, "Mr. Roland."

"Just a minute," Roland said as he waved his hand. "You just reminded me of someone I know."

Valkries spoke in the same indifferent manner, "No."

"How could that be possible? I've never seen anyone on the Cargarde Peninsula who has a third eye," someone mumbled.

"There are people who have three fingers though."

"Alright..." Roland conceded but suddenly burst out boldly, "Charita!"

Valkries, however, did not respond at all as though still in a daze.

If Valkries was a demon from the other world, she should have understood the demon language and had some reaction.

It appeared that she really had nothing to do with that Senior Demon Roland knew.

Roland shrugged, extended out his right hand and said, "I hope you feel better soon, return to the Association, and fight the Erosion together."

She hesitated for a second and slowly stretched out her hand.

The moment the two hands touched each other, Roland could not help uttering a surprised exclamation.

The Defender asked a little irritably, "What's the matter?"

"Her hand is so cold... and a little wet as well."

The onlookers gaffawed. Roland could hear them comment derisively under their breath.

"Frivolous."

"Why did they pick such a brainless young man as the representative of the traditional martialists?"

"There, there. The patient needs some rest. Let's visit the next one," the doctor said while shaking his head. "What a mess..."

Roland shrugged. As the creator of the Dream World, he did not really care about what other people thought of him. Since he could not get anything out of Valkries, there was no point in continuing to stay here. He thus cast Valkries one last glance and left the room.

...

Valkries was still in a shock after everyone left.

She had just experienced the most difficult 15 minutes in her life. She had never thought that one day, she would exercise all her effort just to keep her face straight. It had almost cost all her energy.

When that man came up to her, Valkries felt all her blood within freeze. She would never forget that person. In the memory of the Silent Disaster, she had seen the exact same person stand on the other side of the legacy shard, watching the Silent Disaster being besieged by tentacles.

She had not only been watching but also experiencing it herself. Therefore, she had also been somewhat affected by the Silent Disaster's emotions. As Valkries had also been quite shocked and flustered at that time, she immediately associated Roland with the man in the Silent Disaster's memory when she saw him.

Her previous assumptions were all wrong, and she had to admit that there was a third possibility. The quaver of the Realm of Mind told her something. She had been on the right track, and this world was created by that man. In other words, Roland was the creator of this territory.

Had she met Roland in the real world, she would have immediately killed him. Like most of the upgraded demons, Valkries also possessed extraordinary fighting capacity. No matter how powerful Roland was, she would make every effort to finish him.

Nevertheless, things were a little different in the Realm of Mind. According to the king, nobody could kill him in his own territory. The king was an omnipotent and omniscient sort of existence that was almost like God to her. The king could be exaggerating, but Valkries did not dare take a chance.

She knew very well that she could encounter something worse than death. If Roland also had the ability to probe into her



memories, the information she knew may jeopardize her entire clan.

Therefore, she must be extra cautious when dealing with such a tough enemy.

Fortunately, everything was still uncertain. Valkries could tell that Roland was also in the process of figuring out her true identity. He did not have terrifying perspicacity like the king. Valkries was dimly aware that Roland had seen her somewhere. Although she did not know how, his act of demeanor told her that he remembered her.

Most likely he had met her in the other world.

Otherwise, he would not have asked her whether she had seen anybody with a third eye. The third eye on her forehead was actually the magic stone she had obtained during her third upgrade.

Also, the word "charita" meant "hero" in the ancient language.

Valkries stretched out her hand and studied it up and down. She thought of the moment Roland had touched her hand.

Her breath had almost stopped when Roland had uttered the exclamation. Luckily, she had successfully fooled him. Valkries still remembered the purpose of this trip. It was not only a challenge but also an opportunity. She had easily found the key person in the human race. As a male, he had inherited the legacy shard and also repelled the Silent Disaster with his mind. Beyond a doubt, this man possessed a lot of information that the clan did not know. She must get to the bare truth of it.

Valkries was sure that this man created this world to achieve something, just as the king created the Presiding Holy See to better manage his subordinates. She sniffed conspiracies here from the words "Fallen Evils", "fight" and "Erosion". Therefore, she must figure out what kind of schemes this man was planning in the

Realm of Mind.

The conference that the doctor had mentioned might provide her a glimpse of what was going on.

Valkries clenched her fist at this thought.

Roland... right?

Now, I remember you!

# Chapter 1238: An Army of One Person

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The conference was held in the hall of the sanatorium.

Almost all of the professional martial artists were invited.

However, Roland noticed that there were only about 300 people attending the meeting, which was significantly lower than the number registered in the Prism City. Apart from those who were injured or killed during the battle, some people had cold feet after the massive outbreak of the "Erosion".

They were probably amateur martial artists who had recently joined the Association.

Garcia denounced such cowardice and believed that it was an insult to their awakened Forces of Nature. Those people would pay for their cravenness when the Fallen Evils completely overpowered human beings.

Roland consoled Garcia, but he knew the Martial Artist Association was a relatively loose organization. In a modern society like the Dream World, the Martial Artist Association had no authority to bind the martial artists and ask them to tag along.

Roland had anticipated what direction this meeting would go into.

The Defender, Rock, briefly explained the current dilemma the Association was facing. After the attack at the Prism City, more Fallen Evils attacked the Awakened. Although there was no solid evidence at this point, it appeared that the new enemy that appeared in the Erosion had the ability to control Fallen Evils. This meant that the war would enter a new stage. The Martial Artist Association would organize people and repel the Fallen Evils more systematically. In the meantime, the Fallen Evils had also come up with plans to kill martial artists. The situation for human beings was now very critical.

Rock thus suggested that all the martial artists, both official members and newbies, should stay here in this sanatorium until order was re-established in the Prism City, as the sanatorium would afford some protection from their enemies. He also expressed his wish that all the invited martial artists should realize the precarious condition they were currently in and united to fight this battle together.

This was a perfect way to raise the morale among the martial artists. Roland believed that once this information spread, some hesitant amateur martial artists would probably return to the Association.

Whether or not all the people came back depended on the outcome of the battle. If the Fallen Evils outstripped the Association, more people would probably choose to flee.

It was extremely difficult to re-establish confidence.

As Roland had expected, Rock started to discuss the countermeasure.

One strategy was to send for the martial artists from other cities to solve Prism City's lack of manpower.

Secondly, the Martial Artist Contest should continue, in order to attract more Fallen Evils. The government and the executives of the Association had already approved this plan. Once the enemy appeared, they would face the wrath of the Defender and the martial artists.

Thirdly, the Association would set up a patrol team to prevent the Fallen Evils from attacking innocent citizens. Therefore, the martial artists would be divided into several groups, each of which being responsible for defending one area. In this way, they could immediately support each other in the event of an emergency and could also besiege the enemy once they received information from the intelligence agency.

The preliminary counterattack plan was quite conservative, considering that they lacked sufficient information.

The leader of each group could select their own team members, and a heated discussion immediately swept over the hall.

Roland did not want to be assigned to any team. In a sense, he himself was an army, and he did not want anyone to interfere with his magic core collection plan. Fortunately, few people in the Association knew him, so nobody asked him to join their team.

Until Fei Yuhan walked up to him and offered an invitation.

In fact, as the most popular martial artists, Fei Yuhan only invited two people.

But Roland turned her down without the slightest hesitation.

Everyone dropped their jaws, including Garcia. She asked Roland to think it over. It appeared that even self-disciplined Garcia spoke highly of this girl.

It took Roland a while to convince Garcia that he'd be better off fighting alone. The best proof was his previous feats and his hunting license.

The only thing that Roland was concerned about was that the other person Fei Yuhan invited was the demon martial artist, Valkries.

It was 10:00 PM when Roland returned to his apartment.

After Zero went to bed, Roland entered the second floor of the Rose Café through the side door of the warehouse.

More than 50 Taquila ancient witches bowed to him and paid him the highest respect. This was the first time that so many witches had come to the Dream World. The room was packed.

Back in the Union age, a team of 50 combat witches would have been sufficient to conduct a small battle.

"Any luck?"

Roland looked toward Faldi.

"Yes, the flies released by the Bug Nest sensed a few disappearing magic reactions," Faldi replied as she scrolled down the cell phone screen and showed Roland the map. She was not used to using the digital map, but somehow she managed it. "Normally, this indicates that there are God's Stones of Retaliation around there, or that our target can hide its magic power. If neither of the two applies, then it would mean that the target is dead."

"But there's no God's Stone of Retaliation in the Dream World, and the Force of Nature isn't as diverse as witches' abilities," Roland said.

"That's right. So we assume that the Fallen Evils fought with the awakened martial artists. Somebody died and their cores were taken away," Faldi replied while nodding. "Based on the direction of the magic reaction, they probably went here —"

She pointed at a pier on the inner river.

It appeared that the river bank was always the first choice of locations to commit a crime.

"Since my flies can't go that far, I contacted Ling for further investigation. She told me an hour ago that she found many Fallen Evils."

"Well done," Roland said with a faint smile. This was the reason he did not need the support of the Association. The Taquila witches could locate the enemies and kill them on their own. "I believe that you're all ready."

"Your Majesty, please issue your command," the witches chorused.

Their morale was high after they had had a good time during the day.

For them, fighting was another way to savor their past.

In addition to enjoying food, using magic was extremely joyous for them.

"Everyone, ready, go!" Roland ordered briskly.

"Yes, Your Majesty!"

# Table of Contents

[Release That Witch](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Chapter 1201: Proof](#)

[Chapter 1202: A Thunderous War](#)

[Chapter 1203: A Black Present](#)

[Chapter 1204: The Ridge of the Continent](#)

[Chapter 1205: A Dangerous Signal](#)

[Chapter 1206: Just A Breath Away](#)

[Chapter 1207: A New Idea](#)

[Chapter 1208: Van'er's Gun](#)

[Chapter 1209: Testing Result](#)

[Chapter 1210: A Cube-Powered Vehicle](#)

[Chapter 1211: A Farming Tractor](#)

[Chapter 1212: Rainbow Stone](#)

[Chapter 1213: The Beginning of an Enterprise](#)

[Chapter 1214: The Second Magic Movie](#)

[Chapter 1215: The Reoccurrence of the Legend](#)

[Chapter 1216: A Chain Reaction](#)

[Chapter 1217: Doomsday \(I\)](#)

[Chapter 1218: Doomsday \(II\)](#)

[Chapter 1219: The Investigation of the Abnormal Phenomenon](#)

[Chapter 1220: The Origin of the Story](#)

[Chapter 1221: The Nonexistent Bloody Moon](#)

[Chapter 1222: The Promise of the Divine Will](#)

[Chapter 1223: Lan](#)

[Chapter 1224: The Remedy](#)

[Chapter 1225: The Remedy \(II\)](#)

[Chapter 1226: The Prison of the Heart](#)

[Chapter 1227: The Fall of Prism City](#)

[Chapter 1228: God's Enmity](#)

[Chapter 1229: The Red Mist](#)

[Chapter 1230: An Emergency Meeting](#)

[Chapter 1231: Hope](#)

[Chapter 1232: Brother](#)

[Chapter 1233: Being Trapped](#)



[Chapter 1234: A Strange World](#)

[Chapter 1235: The Cloud School](#)

[Chapter 1236: Striking Similarities](#)

[Chapter 1237: Observation](#)

[Chapter 1238: An Army of One Person](#)